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EXPERIENCES OF A TRUTH-SEEKER

VOL. I

(PART I)

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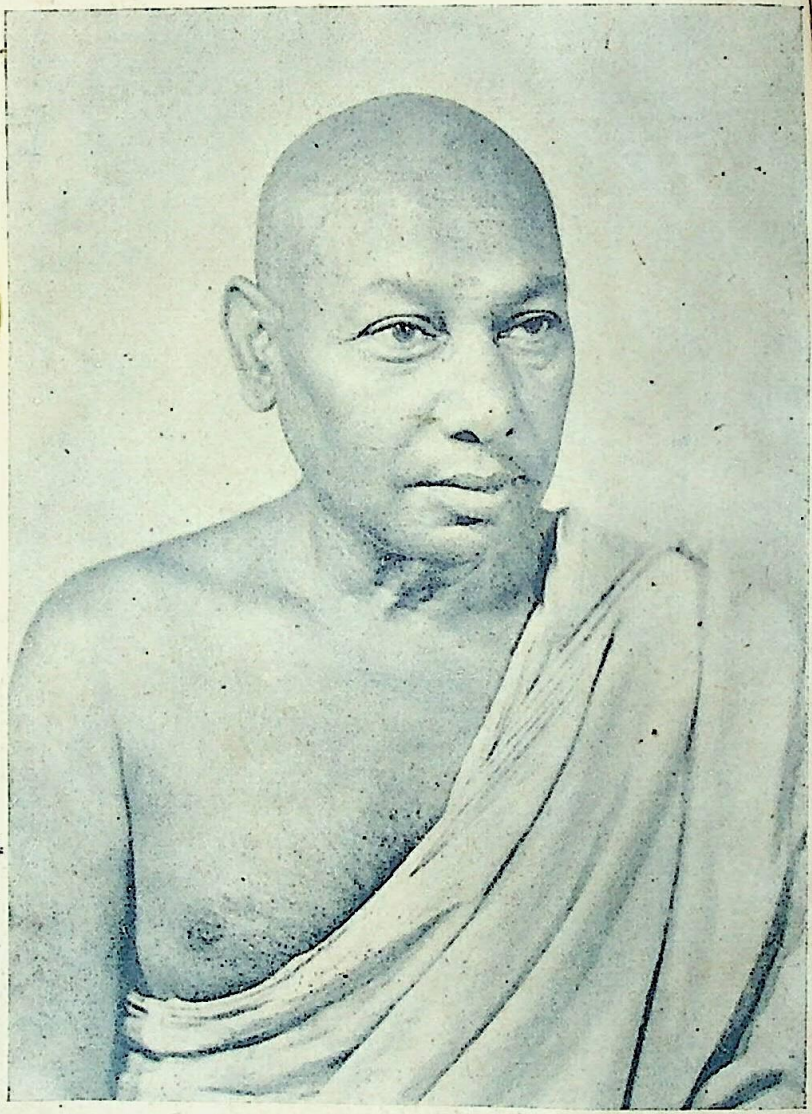
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Sadhu Santinatha (At the age of sixty, 1949)

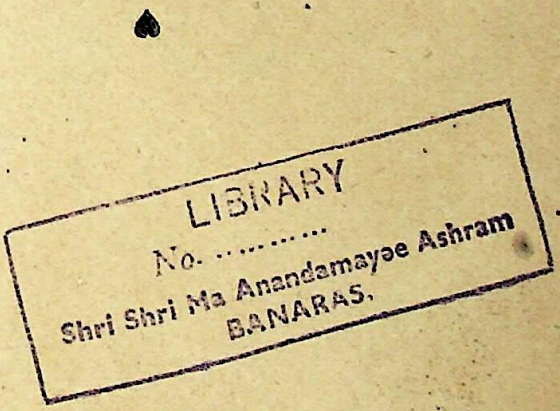
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VOLUME I

(PART I)



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INTRODUCTION

I believe it to be a day of my 'absolution' when I had the first opportunity to have the 'darashan' of the Late Sādhu S'ri S'āntināṭha in 1948 in a cave at Mt. Abu.

There were two facets to the life of Sādhuji, one was of renunciation, the other of revolution. This in itself was a unique combination. Passing his life in seclusion he neither craved for popularity nor for fame, and thus the world knows either nothing or very little about him. In his youth he participated in the Bengal Partition Movement. This revolutionary spirit is a seedling which evolves into a revolutionary fervour in his later works. Breaking the chain of dogmas, with his awakened reasoning he equipped himself to write the three memorable volumes entitled "Experiences of a Truth-Seeker", to dispell the gloom of dogmatism and sectarianism which usually darkens the thinking mind and makes it grope in the wilderness. The ultimate realisation of Sādhuji was the service of mankind.

Before preparing his later works, he was thoroughly convinced by his own experiences of the unrealisableness and unascertainableness of the Absolute, psychologically through all stages of Samādhi or meditation and logically through all speculations. It is true that he did not offer any new principle for our guidance. This he explained, however, by showing the limitations of the human understanding. The following remark well applies to him:

"There is a suspicion that both Bradley, and Kant before him, have been too ready to ascribe the contra-

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dictions they see in pure thought to the nature of thougt itself rather than to the inadequacy of our concepts and particularly our mathematical concepts...etc.'"*

In the chapter entitled " Faith in Truth–Realisation Lost " in this book and in the chapters that will form a separate part, Sādhuji did not at all raise but rather fully visualised the problem of the realilisation of Truth. He investigated the cause of the conflicting concepts about the realisation of Truth by Sādhakas of different sects when they attained the same state in Samādhi. He therefore applied the Kantian method of critical analysis towards the solution of the foregoing problem. Judged in the above perspective, Sādhuji was later influenced by the Kantian approach that we cannot know until we know how to know as a prerequisite of all philosophy, but not by Kant's theology. He, however, emphasised on knowing as a precondition to believing.

To conclude, the value of Sādhuji's thought, as of any philosophical speculation, lies not in the nature of the conclusions arrived at but in the reasonings by which they are supported.

Brow's Pole
Raipur,
Ahmedabad

Kumudben B. Rawal

* Dorothy M. Emmet, Whitehead's Philosophy of Organism, pp. 60-61.

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FOREWORD

Sadhu Santinath was an extraordinary truth-seeker all his life. From his early youth Trnth – realisation was the sole ambition of his life. Even when he was a mere school boy, it was evident from his character and conduct that he could never rest contented with living the life of a mediocre. He seemed to have been born with an indomitable will, an uncompromising temperament, a dauntless determination, an inexhaustible storehouse of physical and mental energy, a wonderful capacity for undergoing all kinds of hardships and privations, an all-defying spirit of independence, courage and fearlessness and an inflexible devotion to what he understood or believed to be true and just and readiness to face all sorts of difficulties and embrace all forms of sufferings for its sake. With all these, he had a very softheart which easily melted at the sight of the distress of others. In the quarrels among boys he always took the side of the weak and the oppressed. He would never hesitate to give his own food to a hungry beggar and to starve himself. Though himself the youngest son of a rich father, he suffered mental agony at the thought of the poverty and distress of the people around him and looked for opportunities to be serviceable to them. Extraordinary hardness and extraordinary softness were combined in his natural disposition.

Hardly had he reached his youth, when a deep spiritual yearning possessed his mind and heart. Pursuit of truth and purity in thought, speech and action was the motto of his young life. This led him naturally to

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the cultivation of the religious thoughts, emotions and practices, as he imbibed them from the domestic customs and social traditions as well as from the study of religious books he had the opportunity of reading. But truth and purity as ordinarily understood could not satisfy him. He felt an inner craving for higher and higher orders of truth and therefore for higher and higher forms of intellectual moral and spiritual self-discipline. He felt that devotion to truth did not mean merely to speak out what one already knew or believed to be truth or even to regulate conduct in accordance with such undeveloped and imperfect view of truth, since there might be untruth in the knowledge or belief itself. He inwardly felt the call of Truth. The Ultimate Truth about himself and the Ultimate Truth behind the objective world of diversities must be discovered and experienced, and the entire life must be put in tune with this Ultimate Truth. So long as this was not accomplished, one had no right to regard oneself as perfectly truthful. Until and unless the practical life was thoroughly imbued with love of and devotion to the Absolute Truth, it could not be regarded as perfectly pure. True goodness of character must therefore consist in the all-round discipline of the body, the senses, the mind, the heart and the intellect for the realisation of the Absolute Truth, and the deeper and deeper concentration of all thoughts and emotions and desires in that one direction. The young aspirant became more and more restless for finding out the most appropriate means for the purification of his whole being, for the thorough discipline of all the instruments of right knowledge, right emotion and right will, for the concentration of

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his whole energy upon Truth-realisation and finally for the direct experience of the Absolute Truth.

This earnest indomitable yearning for Truth-realisation and spiritual emlightenment dragged the young student from teachers to teachers, from books to books, from Ashramas to Ashramas, from saints to saints. He left the College, he left his home. He left the revolutionary political organisation, to serve which with all his energy he had taken a sacred vow before Mother Kali with the blood of his heart. He adopted one form of spiritual selfdiscipline after another. Whatever course of sádhaná he adopted, he immersed himself in it day and night for the time being. When put to jail on a charge of conspiracy, he utilized the whole period for intensive sádhaná.

His restless soul found peace at the feet of Yogiraj Gambhirnath of Gorakhpur. He saw in his absolutely tranquil and blissful face, always shining with the light of Divine wisdom and never in the least affected by all the happenings of the outer world, the most glorious embodiment of perfect Truth-realisation and spiritual illumination. Of all the numerous saints he came in contact with in course of his search for Truth, this Mahápurusha was the only one who appeared to him to be continuously living and moving and having his whole being in Truth. He recognised him as his Guru and surrendered himself wholly to his feet for sure guidance in the path of Truth-realisation. The Guru accepted him as a worthy disciple and having led him through some preliminary course of selfdiscipline permitted him to renounce all worldly connections, to enter formally into the monastic order and to live a

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life of constant meditation of Truth. From the Guru he got the sannyása name of Santinath. Henceforth Sadhu Santinath dedictated his whole time and energy to spiritual selfdiscipline, as instructed by the Guru, in hills and jungles, in solitary huts or caves. All who saw him during the period of his intensive sádhaná were struck with astonishment, and made homage to him as an exceptional *yogi* and *jnani*. His whole being was plunged in the deepest meditation. The world seemed not to exist for him. Those who never seriously engaged themselves in the practice of concentration and meditation cannot form any idea of the heroic struggles through which a sádhaka has to pass before he can establish himself in the state of perfect absorption with the object of contemplation and blissful rest. With undaunted determination and ceaseless perseverance Sadhu Santinath overcame all the inner obstacles in the path, vanquished all the worldward tendencies and movements of the mind, liberated the consciousness from all the subtle thoughts, desires and feelings which hindered illumination and was ultimately successful in attaining the states of *Savikalpa* and *Nirbikalpa Sama'dhi*.

He attained a state of consciousness, which, in accordance with the intellectual training he had so long received, he interpreted as the state of Truth-realisation. His mind came under his perfect control and was free from all cares and anxieties, all desires and ambitions. He realised the individual soul as identical with the Supreme Spirit, Brahman, devoid of all differences and limitations. He felt himself as above all worldly bondages and as having reached the *Jivanmukta* stage.

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Deep meditation became almost converted into his normal nature. He resolved upon spending his earthly life in enjoying the bliss of this illumined state of consciousness. But that was not to be. His physical body stood against him. He was attacked by a terrible headache, which would be intensified with the intensity of his meditation. Under expert medical advice he was compelled to give up the practice of deep meditation. But his mind was so disciplined that it was difficult for him to avoid meditation and to think of worldly diversities. In order to divert his attention and change his habit, he took to philosophical studies. The whole plan of his life had to be turned to a different direction.

The critical attitude of his intellect, which was now progressively developed in him, was first directed against the validity of his own Truth-realisation. He found by a comparative study of the great philosophical systems and of the teachings of the greatest religious terchers of India and the world that their conceptions about the Absolute Truth differed widely and irreconcilably from one another, while most of the founders of religious sects and many of their distinguished followers claimed to have reached the highest state of spiritual enlightenment and to have been blessed with the direct experience of the Ultimate Truth. If as the result of the practice of the deepest contemplation, meditation and Samadhi, the Absolute Truth were realisable, why should there be such differences among the saints of the highest order with regard to the nature of the Absolute Truth? Why should his own realisation differ from those of Buddha or Mahavira or Chaitanya or Nanaka or

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other saints, and why should their realisations also mutually differ ? The question was insoluble to him, and he gradually lost faith in the very possibility of Truth-realisation. Further reflection upon the question led him to the conclusion that Truth-realisation was psychologically not possible for the human mind. He was convinced that the deepest meditation culminating in *Savikalpa* and *Nirbikalpa* Samádhi leads undoubtedly to a perfectly calm and tranquil state of consciousness, free from all thoughts, desires, emotions, worldly attachments and sufferings, but that it can never lead to the knowledge of Truth.

Even when he lost faith in the possibility of the realisation of the Absolute Truth through meditation and Samádhi, he did not lose faith in the possibility of the ascertainment of the true character of the Absolute Reality through the most systematic metaphysical reasoning. Hence his interest in philosophical studies and metaphysical speculations was greatly intensified. He with his unique energy and enthusiasm studied the standard works of most of the philosophical schools of India and the West, ancient and modern, in printing and in manuscript. He travelled thousands of miles in search of books and scholars. He exhausted many of the famous libraries of the country. He collected and weighed the arguments and counter-arguments of the representative thinkers of the different systems of thought, metaphysical as well as anti-metaphysical. For many years search for the Ultimate Truth in the path of philosophy was his principal sádhaná, though his leisure periods were utilized in the enjoyment of the blissful tranquillity of objectless meditation. The ultimate

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result of his philosophical search was that the nature of the Absolute Truth cannot possibly be ascertained by any unassailable arguments. Thus he lost faith in Philosophy also as a means of arriving at the Ultimate Truth. His final conclusion was that the human mind is so constituted that the Absolute Truth is and must for ever be unrealisable and unascertainable to it,—that all searches for Truth must end in the satisfaction of the discovery of the natural limitation of the human mind with regard to the Absolute Truth. The human consciousness may through ceaseless spiritual discipline attain perfect calmness and tranquillity, freedom from desires and attachments and the consequent sorrows and fears and cares and anxieties; but it must remain within the realm of its limitations and the Absolute Truth must for ever remain beyond its reach. His conclusion did not give any sense of frustration to his truth-seeking soul. The unrealisableness and unascertainableness of the Absolute Truth was the truth which he realised as the result of his lifelong search and this gave him satisfaction and peace.

Along with his spirit of search for Truth the spirit of service to fellowmen was also innate in his nature. After he reached the final conclusion about the realisation and ascertainment of Truth, he thought it his duty to his countrymen to present his views as well as the history of his sádhaná to them in a spirit of service. This led him to write a number of books, in English, Bengali, Hindi and Sanskrit. In writing his English books he sought my assistance, and I gladly rendered what assistance I could, though I could not accept his views. I had been in the most intimate terms with this

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holy man for about thirtyfive years, and I always valued his life much more than his philosophical views. We were brothers to each other, as humble disciples of the same Guru, and our mutual affection was never affected by the differences of our philosophical views or by the differences of our modes of life.

His lastwork is the "Experiences of a Truth-seeker." It was designed to be complete in three volumes. The manuscripts of all the three volumes were almost finished. The printing of the first volume was nearing completion. But he was not destined to see the publication, even of this, first volume. We met together at our *Guru-dha'ma*, the Gorakhnath Temple at Gorakhpur, in October, 1949. He had suddenly a stroke of apoplexy. He recovered from it in course of three days, apparently by force of his determination. He was very eager to see the completion of the printing of his book. In spite of his weakness and infirmity he started for Ahmedabad on the 27th October. He could not bear the strain. He left his mortal frame in the night of the 28th within the train. His lifeless body was discovered in the Bandiqui Station and cremated there by the Railway Police. The life of the spiritual hero ended at the age of 60. Very rarely do we get the story of the eventful life of a spiritual hero written by himself. I hope this book will be of substantial value to the truth-seekers of the present age.

Akshaya Kumar Banerjea.
Principal,
Maharana Pratap Degree College,
GORAKHPUR (u. p.).

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EXPERIENCES OF A TRUTH-SEEKER

PREFACE

Seated all alone in a solitary cave in the Himalayas, facing a small brook gently flowing below from the upper regions and surrounded on all sides by ranges of hills of different heights and shapes, sprinkled with snow here and there, with nothing but a pencil and some pieces of blank paper in my possession, I first took it into my head to recollect and note down the variously coloured experiences of my spiritual journey and the various revolutionary changes through which my conception about Reality and the summum bonum of life, my outlook on the world and the human affairs, my mode of external and internal self-discipline and my idea about men and things passed in course of this journey. Though meditation was the joy of my life, the recollections of the past appeared now and then interesting to me during the periods when the mind took rest from deep meditation. The idea of sharing my experiences with other truth-seekers and giving my countrymen the benefit of what I found in the world of religion and philosophy gradually developed in my mind. I intimated my desire to the esteemed friend of mine, who had been of great help to me in writing many of the books I previously published. He approved of my desire and advised me to write in English and promised me his help. Neither my memory nor my power of self-expression in appropriate language was upto the mark. But when the idea took hold of my mind, I could not

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shrink from the work. I ransacked my memory, lessened the period of meditation, began to note down in my imperfect language what I could recollect. The work went on.

I did not know when and if ever it would be possible for me to finish the work. A life which was spent mostly in caves and jungles was not quite suitable for writing books. But still it had been my fate to write no less than a dozen volumes,–some of them big enough,–and to have them published and distributed. I am myself amused to think how this could be possible. The work undertaken now might also similarly find its way out into the world. I am not in the habit of concerning myself too much with what may or may not happen in future. The idea has somehow got hold of my mind, and I must pursue it. With this attitude I engaged myself in writing out my Experiences, undaunted by thoughts as to how big the book might grow and how and when it would come to light.

Autobiographies are generally written by great men of action, and there is sufficient reason for it. People have a natural longing for authentic information, not only about the big events of their public life, which may be recorded by other competent writers as well, but also about the small but significant events of their private life and their inner thoughts, emotions, ambitions, disappointments, weaknesses, etc. which can be recorded and brought to light only by themselves. Autobiographies of such men have their special value to the reading public. I am fully conscious that I am neither great nor a man of action. People in general

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are not likely to feel much interested in such a life. What is it, then, that impelled me to have a record of my experiences, which is little else than an autobiography? This is a pertinent question, and I am bound to answer it even to my own self.

Having renounced the world in search of Truth, while in the full vigour of my youth, I have lived the life of a *sannya'sin* upto this old age. In this life, not only had I to pass through various kinds of spiritual experiments and mental transformations, but I had also to come in direct contact with various types of religious and pseudo-religious people,—truth-seekers and pretenders of various communities. Many of the ideas, which I had entertained with admiration and reverence about the religious world, underwent changes after changes. I have been disillusioned with regard to many things, the prevailing wrong notions about which exercise considerable influence upon the moral, social and political life of our beloved Motherland. It is generally known,—it is proclaimed with a sense of pride,—that religion is the backbone of the Indian culture and civilization. But it is scarcely known how many kinds of rotten things are passing in the name of religion in the country. I have come across many well-meaning truth-seeking youngmen, who have been awfully misguided by the baseless pretensions of religious leaders and whose valuable lives have consequently become a sad loss to themselves and the society.

Since religion occupies such an important and powerful position in our country, the religious illusions naturally do and have the power to do the greatest

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injuries to the individual as well as the social life of the people. Though I am not a man of action, I think that I, as a member of the society, owe a duty to it in this field. In the present state of my mind, I am actuated by a sense of moral obligation to the society. I feel that I ought to share my external and internal experiences with my fellow-countrymen and particularly my fellow-truthseekers and do what lies in my power to destroy the illusions prevailing in the religious atmosphere of our country. This is the explanation which I offer to myself and the public for undertaking the not very easy task of recording the "Experiences of a truth-seeker." How it will be taken by the readers and how it will benefit the society are not within the range of my consideration.

I began to write this book six years ago. Having no permanent residence of my own, no *Math* or *A'sram*, and no fixed provision for my food and lodging, I cannot live for a long time at any particular locality, I have to dwell temporarily here and there according to my convenience. During this period also I had to take refuge in different places and to accept the hospitality of different sorts of people. Under these circumstances the book has however been somehow finished. It has grown big enough to be published in three or four parts.

Having put together all the materials, I placed them in the hands of my friend referred to in the beginning. He is Srijut Akshaya Kumar Banerjea, M. A. Professor of Philosophy, Anandamohan College, Mymensingh (East Bengal), and a lay disciple of my Guru

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Bábá Gambhirnáthji. He had the generosity to revise thoroughly the entire book, to elaborate the materials and amplify my ideas in many cases, to give suitable expressions to my arguments wherever my language was faulty and to help me in all possible ways in bringing the book to its present form. Without his ungrudging assistance it would not be possible for me to give this publicity to my lifelong experiences in a foreign language, with which I am imperfectly acquainted.

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EXPERIENCES OF A TRUTH-SEEKER

CHAPTER I

The Spiritual Journey Begins.

My spiritual journey may be said to have commenced practically from 1903, when I was a lad of fourteen and a student of the fourth class (Class VII of the present system) of a now defunct High School of Dacca. One day while looking with my boyish curiosity into the stock of old books in our small home-library, I happened to come across one Bengali booklet, entitled *Brahmacharya*. I did not know the meaning of that word, nor could I understand what was meant by restraint of sexual passions and conservation of vital fluid (*Virja*), various methods of which I found discussed in the book. Up to that time I had no personal experience of emission of the fluid nor had I heard of it from any one. The title of the book somehow interested me and I felt an eagerness to go through it. The little which I remember now of the contents of that book is that it laid down certain rules of conduct which a student should carefully observe in order to make himself physically and mentally fit for advancing in the path of true and sturdy manhood. He should rise at the early hour of 4 A. M. and take bath, preferably in a flowing river; sit calm and composed in a suitable posture and pass some time in devotionally uttering the name of God; regularly study some sacred books; live on vegetarian diet; etc. etc. After going through the book I felt an urge to follow these

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principles. From the dawn o ıe very next day I changed my normal habits ,and began to observe these rules as stringently as I could. This was the beginning of my spiritua l career.

I took some vows and made up my mind to live in accordance with some principles:– I will never tell a lie, I will never mix with boys known to be of bad character, I will never while away my time in gossip or idle play like cards and so on. I spared no pains to act up to these ideals. On very few occasions after that I remember to have told a conscious lie (except at the time when I happened to enter into the political field and accepted the principle of telling lies in cases of political emergency for the sake of the country and the party to which I belonged). On many occasions at school and at home I embraced persecution instead of telling a lie. I never mixed with youths of bad character. Even on the play–ground (such as foot–ball) I carefully shunned the company of such youths. I had a strong physique, stronger than that of all my class–mates. Though I was the second youngest boy in my class,* I could beat off all my fellow–students, in case any occasion for fighting arose. They knew that I looked down with violent indignation upon all violations of the principles of right conduct and hence my presence was really a terror to them. They did not generally venture to misbehave in my presence. I was very particular about the right use of time. Whether at home or in school, I was

* The youngest was Chinta Haran Banerjee, our first boy. He was the Senior Professor of English, I. A. College, Dacca University (at present retired).

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determined to make the best use of every moment. Never did I pass a single hour in idleness or in any aimless or unprofitable work.

I remember one peculiar trait of my boyish character,—a feature which is prominently perceptible in my nature even in this advanced age, ripe with a variety of experiences. It was the spirit of boldness, fearlessness of all consequences and defiance of adverse opinions of others. When I had to suffer any trouble as the result of my rash deeds, I never shrank in fear, but faced them with courage and fortitude. When any conflict took place between me and any of my class-mates, they would generally receive a good beating at my hands. They would sometimes complain to the teachers. It was against my principle to make any complaint to superiors, even when I was the aggrieved party. I hated it as a sign of physical and moral weakness. The whips in the hands of the teachers with their reddened eyes and reproachful tones could never frighten me either into disowning my guilt, when I was really guilty, or into weeping and trembling and begging to be excused. In such cases I would stand the trial boldly and calmly without any sign of fear in my face and without any grudge against the trying teachers or the complaining students. I would receive the hard strokes with closed lips and with the body erect, and forget all about them then and there.

Though my memory of the earliest years of my life is shadowy at present, I may mention here a few incidents which I now recollect with some amount of amusing interest as illustrative of the peculiar traits of my boyish character.

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It is well-known that East Bengal, of which my birthplace Dacca is the principal city, is a land of many big rivers and canals and innumerable big tanks. Boys and girls of East Bengal become as much familiar with vast expanses of water as with land and learn to swim and play in water almost from their infancy. I remember to have been an expert swimmer even at the age of seven or eight. In company with my playmates I used to go daily to the river Burigangá, which was very near to our house, and two hours were perhaps the minimum period we required for our bath. We used to enjoy various kinds of sports, without which bath would not be regarded as bath at all. In course of my playful struggles with the strong currents as well as with my playmates my towe would mysteriously disappear almost every day. On returning home I had of course to face the angry eyes and sharp tongue of my affectionate mother, who would sometimes bitterly rebuke me for the loss of the towel as well as for her apprehensions about my health and safety. But when I would go to the river next day, there was not the least memory of the chastisement of the previous day and no indication of any amendment of my conduct as the result thereof. One day when my mother in course of her scolding reminded me o i the absurdity of having a new towel everyday, I furiously made the promise that I would never use any towel in future. It may be interesting to the readers to know that I have kept the promise up to this old age. Never since that seventh or eighth year of my life have I used any towel or napkin after my bath.

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I remember another amusing incident of the same age. My eldest brother was a veteran cigarette-smoker. This appeared to be a usual concomitant of respectability in the educated circle of the time. One day I in company with one of my nephews felt a temptation to have a taste of smoking. I stole one good cigarette (cigar?) from the case, applied a kindled match-stick to it and began to smoke with delight. As I had no previous experience of smoking, I swallowed the whole quantity of the smoke heartily with a deep breath. But to my utter dismay my head began to reel at once and the whole world went on revolving round me. I fell upon a bed and became almost unconscious. I do not remember what followed. But on regaining my distinct consciousness, the first thing I did was to take a vow never to smoke again in my whole life. Here again I may tell the readers that though it has been my lot to live and move in the midst of inveterate smokers, -not only of cigarette, but also of tobacco and *ganja!*, I have never yielded to the temptation of smoking.

I remember that on a few occasions I happened to find a Mohammedan gentleman of high rank attempting to shoot the pigeons which would come to drink water from the water-reservoirs in the water-works (opposite our home). I would strongly protest against this act of cruelty. But he would not listen to my protest. I was however very earnest. Sometimes I would even try to resist him by boldly and obstinately putting myself in such a position that he could not shoot them without firing on me. He would then turn away in disgust and fury.

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Though I was a boy of strong determination and dare-devil nature, my heart was from my very boyhood very soft. I could not tolerate the sufferings of others. Whenever I happened to see or hear of the sorrows of people, known or unknown to me, I would burst into tears. I could not even continue to read a fictitious story, narrating tales of misery. Thoughts about the sorrows of the beggars of our poor country would melt my heart with sympathy. During my early school-days, I remember, I would save half the money (a few pice) given to me for my tiffin or extra pocket-expense, and distribute it among the beggars. When I grew a little older, the feeling of sympathy also grew within me and sought more effective ways of self-expression.

At this time I happened to read an article from the pen of the illustrious Swami Vivekánanda, entitled "Sakhár Prati" (to a friend). I was enamoured by Swamijee's burning spirit of service to mankind, and specially to the poor and the depressed. I found in him the most beautiful and inspiring combination of Religion, Humanism and Patriotism. "Those who are devoted to the selfless service of the creatures of God are the true worshippers of God",—this noble idea preached by the great young saint of Bengal penetrated into my heart, and I bowed before him as the true Guru of the young generation. His message was on the one hand a message of strength, self-confidence and faith in the greatness of our Motherland, and on the other a message of all-embracing love, sympathy, goodwill, service, sacrifice and renunciation. He wanted us to be godly heroes in practical life, to see God in ourselves and all men and

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all living beings and to practise God-realisation through loving and selfless service to those finite manifestations of the Divine. This grand conception of spiritual life captivated my mind and heart for some time. I used to ponder over the sorrows of the poor and the spirit of service flooded my heart. I would sometimes say to myself with deep emotion :- Behold ! how these poor men plod on with their miserable life; they are without sufficient food, without proper clothing, without adequate shelter; when they fall ill, they in most cases leave their lives without treatment and nursing; I must do something to alleviate their sorrows. Deeply moved by such thoughts and sentiments, I had at that early age gathered together some boys of our quarter and formed an association for rendering to the poor and distressed of the locality what services we could with our scanty resources.

In this connection I remember one particular incident, which produced at that time a deep impression upon my mind. A gentleman was attacked with a virulent type of cholera, and I along with some of my associates was engaged in nursing him. In spite of all available medical treatment and our careful nursing, he was steadily approaching death. When all hopes of his survival were lost, we began to utter the name of Hari in loud tones in order to give a Godward turn to his mind during the last moments of his life. The dying gentleman was then found to be speaking of various sorts of things in delirium, and the name of God had little effect on his mind. He had been a business-man - a petty Dálál (an intermediary) in various kinds of business-transactions. Even in his unconscious or semi-conscious state he seemed

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to be engrossed with thoughts about his money-making business, and in delirium only such thoughts found expression in disconnected and indistinct words. Even while passing away from this world, he could not get rid of the worldly thoughts, feelings and desires, which he had cultured all his life. Though I was then a mere boy, this deplorable sight set me a-thinking. I had read in some books that when a man dies, the condition of his mind is determined by the strongest and most permanent habits of his life and the course of his life after death also is determined thereby. If a man lives a pious and God-centred life, he dies a peaceful death, his mind is directed towards God at the moment of death and after death also his disembodied spirit enjoys happiness and rises to higher planes of existence. If on the contrary a man lives a vicious life or if during life-time his thoughts, feelings and desires are wholly or chiefly concerned with the petty transitory worldly interests, he can enjoy no peace of mind at the time of death, he can in no way concentrate his attention on God at that critical moment, and his future life also becomes full of miseries. Such ideas, which I had imbibed from some religious books and from stories occasionally heard from my seniors, were strongly confirmed and deeply impressed upon my boyish mind by what I actually saw and heard in the case of the dying gentleman. This experience produced in my mind a determination that I should culture the best possible habits and the noblest possible thoughts, feelings and desires during the whole of my life, so that I may be prepared for the most peaceful and glorious death.

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When I attained the sixteenth year I had the chance of experiencing for the first time nocturnal emissions and ugly dreams. I was surprised that though so carefully abiding by the rules of *Brahmacharya* (as I learnt them from the small book), I should be a victim to it. On the first few occasions I thought that it must have been due to some physical causes. To be relieved from it I used to wash my whole body with cold water before going to bed. This did not prove to be a sure remedy. Even after that I had occasionally visions of girls, which aroused sexual impulse in my mind and resulted in unpleasant physical consequences. I was extremely bewildered by such experiences. I ransacked my brain to discover the grounds for such excitements in dreams. I would never consciously look upon any girl with what might be called sexual appetite. I would never wilfully entertain any thoughts about women in my mind or cherish any sexual feelings. Why then should this demon of lust take possession of my body and mind in the state of sleep? I was at a loss to find out the doors through which the demon got entrance into my consciousness and the ways for driving him out. I was puzzled and perplexed. Sometime later I felt that the demon attacked me even in my waking state. The sight of a beautiful girl would now and then create a wave in my heart. Though the wave was mild and could be easily put down by strong determination, it demonstrated that the sex-consciousness from which I wanted to keep myself perfectly free was developing in me.

After a good deal of serious thinking I came to the conclusion that sexual tendencies must have been

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naturally latent in my mind and nerves and that in youth along with growth of the other faculties and functions of the body and the mind they also were awakened and developed. In the waking state the power of discrimination between the desirable and the undesirable and the will to suppress the undesirable and pursue the desirable being strong enough, the undesirable sexual tendencies cannot generally come to the forefront of the consciousness and create any disturbance in the nervous system. Moreover, the mind and the body are then occupied with various things of the world, and these occupations keep the unwanted thoughts and feelings and desires down at a lower level of consciousness. Further, those tendencies of the mind and the body which are disapproved by public opinion or the conscience of the society cannot generally venture to exhibit themselves in the broad day-light. But in the state of sleep all these restraining influences are absent. The will that discriminates and selects and controls and regulates is then inactive. The occupations governed by the practical needs of worldly life are then absent. The mind is not then afraid of any public opinion. Conscience with the intellect takes rest. There is then no check upon the latent desires and passions. They can easily assert themselves and operate upon the nerves. The tendencies present in the sub-conscious region of the mind come to the fore-front, when those operating on the waking consciousness give way, and they gratify themselves by exciting the weakened nerves and brains. Some such explanations arose in my boyish intellect. I tried to gird up my loins and to make my mind and nerves so strong and pure and lustless during the

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waking hours that even during sleep they might not be perturbed by the latent desires and passions.

As I knew that such dreams were indications of moral weakness and were serious obstacles in the path of a man's all-round progress in life and that emission of vital fluid meant the waste of the most vital elements of the brain and nerves and hence the gradual loss of the powers of the body and the mind, I was awfully disturbed and puzzled by such occurrences and eagerly sought for the means of escape from what appeared to be virtual death to me. After some deep thinking I caught hold of the idea that if I cultured self-control more strongly and with still greater determination during the period of waking, it would exert its influence upon the subconscious mind as well, and then in dream-states also the undesirable impulses would not create such disturbance. I began to cultivate higher and nobler thoughts and emotions and to adopt some spiritual practices with stronger zeal and fervour. I learnt to appreciate the deeper significance of the teachings of wise men that boys should not intimately mix with girls. Though I was not in the habit of mixing and talking and playing with girls, I had previously no idea that this could be so injurious to the physical and mental health of the boys.

At this stage I studied Mahátmá Aswini Kumar Dutta's *Bhakti Yoga*, where I found various ways of strengthening moral character and practising self-control. The book gave a fresh impetus to my determination to suppress Káma or sexual propensity, which was spoken of as the most dangerous enemy in the path of physical,

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moral and spiritual advancement. For this purpose I always kept guard on my mind and engaged it in the cultivation of good thoughts, so that no evil desires or feelings, no passions or sexual impulses, might find any opportunity to lead it astray. I would carefully avoid talks and thoughts about women as well as men having attachment to women. I would never read novels, which generally dealt with erotic relations between men and women. I would never mix with girls, or talk to any women in private. I was cautious against looking at the face of any woman except my revered mother. I formed the habit of keeping my eyes fixed upon the toes of my feet while walking. Except on one or two occasions I never attended theatre. Cinemas had not at that time come to the field to exercise their wily influence upon young minds. I made determined efforts to control my anger, which also was regarded as an enemy to the full growth of manhood. I used to keep silent or shut the doors of my room whenever any occasion for anger arose. Pondering over the occurrence I would try to find out my own weakness or defect or guilt and to turn the anger against myself. Sometimes I would think within myself that if I were in the position of the person with whom I got angry, I also would have behaved in the same way and hence there was no justification for my being enraged at his conduct. On some occasions I used to retire to some solitary quarter and ponder over the sorrows, anxieties, and worries of worldly life. I never passed my time in merriment or in light amusements. I could not count anybody as my comrade or friend, because I found none

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with a mentality similar to mine. I accustomed my body and mind to all kinds of hardships. I gave up shoes, shirts (except in school) and blankets. Even in winter I managed to pass nights with my single cloth on. I left off the use of umbrella; sometimes (afterwards) owing to zeal for "Swadeshi" I attended school with bamboo-umbrella, though it appeared ridiculous to my fellow-students and other on-lookers. I used to study regularly ethical and religious literature. I had a fascinating love for the *Gita*; I got it by heart and used to recite the whole of it every morning (though I could not understand it). During this period whenever I got leisure I used to chant the name of Shiva and attend the Shiva temple and sit before the idol and pray for Bhakti alone. I took the idol for living God.

Let me give the readers an idea of how I first came to believe in the existence of God and how this belief developed into my devotion to Shiva. I do not exactly remember when and how I first imbibed the conception of God. I suppose I got this notion from the words and deeds of my beloved mother. I cannot recollect definitely what understood by God at that time. Most probably I had some vague and nebulous idea that God is some high personage who is the Creator and the Regulator of this world. This I distinctly remember that when I grew a little older, I would sometimes look at the infinite expanse of the firmament above or at the vast open field in front of me, and their vastness would fill my mind with a sense of sublimity. I would think that such an immeasurably vast and variegated world must have been the creation of

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an omnipotent God. Sometimes the beauty of the evening sky lit up with a riot of colours would lead me to think that this was a Divine creation. The order and harmony I experienced in the world, the regularity of the appearance and the disappearance of the sun and the moon, of the bright and the dark fortnights, of the harvests and season-fruits, etc. etc. confirmed the impression that all these were governed by the Divine Will. In the boyish mind an idea was formed that God lives in some high region beyond the starry blue sky. Sometimes I heard people say that God is everywhere; sometimes I happened to hear that all these diverse objects of our experience are finite forms in which infinite God manifests Himself.

I remember that when I was a mere boy my mother used to visit the neighbouring temples and on many occasions I would accompany her. In the *Dha'keshwari*-temple she would order me, "Bow down before this, this is Mother Durgá, She is God;" in the *Shiva* temple she would bid me "make obeisance reverentially to old Shiva, the living God"; in the Vishnu temple she would command me, "Do homage to the Deity, He is Krishna, the Lord of the world." I was sometimes astonished to find that though the presiding Deities of the different temples were of different shapes and sizes and colours and forms and had different names and different modes of worship, my mother as well as the other worshippers looked upon and spoke of them as essentially the same one God and worshipped them with the same faith and spirit of devotion. They made no difference between Kali, Durgá, Krishna, Shiva, Vishnu, Ráma, and the

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other Gods and Goddesses, in showing their reverence, offering their homage and saying their prayers.

In this way the idea was impressed upon my mind that the same God was living in all these idols. This idea got more strength from the sight of the people in general earnestly and sincerely worshipping these idols. Many persons visited these temples and worshipped the idols in various ways with different materials of worship. I observed that they narrated before the idols their wants and desires and prayed to them for the removal of the wants and gratification of the desires. Such experiences prompted me also to offer prayers to the Divinised Idols. I do not remember for what purpose my prayers were offered at that time,—most probably they were not for the attainment of any object particularly aimed at. At that time the feeling of sorrow did not become acute in my heart, nor did I learn to pray for the relief of any unfelt and unknown possible sorrow. So my prayer was only for the sake of prayer, only in imitation of the seniors—and not for the satisfaction of any special want.

There are a good many religious practices prevalent in our country, such as *Kirtan*, and *Loot* (Congregational devotional songs in glorification of God and distribution of sweets in His name), *puja'* of *Satyana'rayan* (a special form of the congregational worship of the Lord accompanied with distribution of sweets offered to Him), the *puja'* of *Sani-Tha'kur* (another similar form of congregational worship offered to a Form of the Deity whose displeasure may bring down miseries on us), and so on. These pleasant forms of worship are popular

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among the village-people and they keep alive the religious consciousness of the half-educated and uneducated men and women of the country. They awaken the spirit of worship and devotion even in the hearts of the little boys and girls. I as a little boy used to delightfully take part in such congregations and join the chorus in singing songs of praise to the Divine. Though I passed my boyhood in the town of Dacca, these popular religious practices were not uncommon in our neighbourhood and even in our own family.

But as a town-boy I had opportunities to attend the church-prayers as well. Beautiful pictures were distributed among little school-boys like myself in the Church every Sunday. This was a special attractive feature of the Church to me at that time. I joined the congregational prayer, though with very little understanding and intelligent interest in the affair. We stood up all together and prayed to God. After sometime I became a member of the Y. M. C. A., chiefly to avail myself of the advantage of joining the indoor and outdoor games, for which there was nice arrangement in this Association. Here I took lessons on the Bible from a European lady (wife of the Head of the Church). I would join the church-prayer and chant hymns along with others. The church where I used to go was a Protestant Church. Sometimes I went to visit the Roman Catholic Church which was opposite to the Protestant Church. The Catholic Church had many idols, but the Protestant Church had none. Now and then I used to attend the temple of the Brâhmos on Sunday, mainly for the purpose of hearing melodious songs. There also

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I observed that they all prayed to God without an idol before them.

From my experiences of the Christian and Brâhma forms of prayer, I got the idea that God could be worshipped as a Formless Being, with all the glorious attributes and powers, but without any visible and tangible body. I had no clear conception about it. During this time I used to go to our (Hindu) temples as well and respectfully bow down before the Divine Images, offer flowers and fruits and sweets to them, and prayed to them with my puerile faith and devotion. I heard many people say that formless God takes up various forms, and hence every worship reaches God.

I myself had greater liking for image-worship and a special attraction for Shiva-Linga. My religious-minded mother used to worship God daily by making earthen Shiva-Linga and sing hymns to Shiva. I saw and heard all this and learnt to chant those hymns. Sometimes I would sing them loudly. My mother used to study *Purâ'n* and narrate to me many legends about Kali, Durgâ, Ganesh, Krishna, Ram and Shiva, specially praising SHIVA and exalting Him as the highest of all deities. As I had implicit faith in the words of my revered mother I came to acquire a partiality for SHIVA. And this feeling continued in a somewhat refined form even in my *Sa'dhaka*-life. On some occasions, when my religious tendency was a little more developed, I used to go to a temple where there were images of Kali, Ganesh and Shiva-Linga. As I had a deep love and regard for Shiva, I would take my seat just in front of Shiva in preference to the other deities. After some

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time my boyish mind was haunted by the thought that Kali and Ganesh might get enraged at my partiality to Shiva. This led me to pray to Kali and Ganesh humbly not to become angry with me, before I sat down immersed in the thought of Shiva, my Beloved. In this way I went on practising *Bhakti*. My religious practice did not consist in any form of ritualistic worship, but only in repeating the name of Shiva with faith and devotion. I was so intoxicated with *Bhakti* at that time that I would avoid the company of men, however saintly and noble, who did not belong to the *Bhakti* cult. I remember that on one occasion I saw Soham Swámi, (formerly Syámá Kánta Banerjee, the celebrated gymnast, who had become famous by his wonderful play with tigers, and in his later life turned into a Sannyási) in my neighbour's house, but I did not talk to him nor did I go to see him at his place, only because I was told that he spoke against *Bhakti* and was a non-vegetarian.

Thus I went on with the strict observance of the self-imposed rules of morality and the cultivation of *Bhakti* (intense love for the Divine) in my boyish way. I was even then a school-boy. In course of these practices I observed a salient change imperceptibly occurring in my outlook on life. Till now I had been more interested in the service of the poor. But with the development of my religious sentiments I found that I became more and more concerned with myself and my mind was more and more occupied with other-worldly thoughts. My mind was assailed by such thoughts as:—Who am I? Whence have I come? What

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is the object of my life? At times I would repair to lonely cremation grounds or solitude, far from the din and bustle of the town, with vast open landscapes to feast my eyes on or a deserted temple and ponder over the destinies and ideals of human life. My altruistic tendencies yielded to my egoistic spiritual idealism.

When I was thus preparing for a higher spiritual life, my home tried to put a curb on my ideas and ideals. My parents could not tolerate the idea that their dearest youngest child should live such a peculiar life,—a life which they naturally apprehended to be a prelude to or preparation for renouncing the world and becoming a *Sannya'sin*. They at first tried to bring me back to the ordinary way of life by persuasion and advice, but they found me adamant in my resolve. Then they took to various forms of chastisement and persecution and oppression for the purpose of curing what they from their view-point regarded as my insanity and restoring my normal mentality. In order to dissuade me from vegetarian diet they served me only boiled rice and salt and nothing else, and I had to live on this food for months together. They also made arrangements for getting me married, and when I refused to be entrapped, they put undue pressure upon me. But all their efforts failed. The strength of my determination appeared to increase with the intensity of the vexatious persecution of my guardians and relatives.

I was not a boy of passive nature. From my early childhood I had been somewhat strong-willed. When once I had taken it into my head that I should get something or do something, no amount of coaxing and

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cajoling or scolding and beating could have turned away my attention or dissuaded me from having my way. With the growth of my age and wisdom I learnt to exercise judgement and discretion in the choice of the object of my pursuit; but once the decision was made – once any course of action was accepted as right and proper for me, – I would obstinately stick to it and would not pay any heed to persuasion or persecution or the feelings and opinions of others, even though these others might be my most respected parents or teachers or most beloved kith and kin. Accordingly when I once arrived at the decision that married life was inconsistent with the spiritual ideal which I aspired after and resolved upon pursuing, all forms of conciliatory and repressive measures adopted by my deeply affectionate and highly revered parents as well as other beloved brothers and sisters and friends failed to bring about any change in my attitude and determination.

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CHAPTER II

Influence of Political Atmosphere

It was at this period of my life, when my budding spiritual consciousness was slowly, but steadily, gaining strength, that the political atmosphere of our country came to exercise a revolutionary influence upon my character and conduct. Bengal was at this time in a state of unprecedented turmoil. In 1905, Lord Curzon, the then Viceroy of India, partitioned Bengal into two provinces in the teeth of strong opposition from all patriotic Bengalis, and particularly from the Hindus, whose national consciousness was much more awakened than that of the Mohammedans in general. Aggrieved and puzzled at this autocratic and insolent act of the Viceroy the Hindus ultimately decided to lay hands on the pocket of the mercantile British people by boycotting British goods. Within a very short time the bulk of the Hindus stood up like one man and successfully carried on the movement of *Swadeshi* and *Boycott* by holding meetings and conferences in towns and villages, rousing an anti-government and anti-British consciousness among the masses through fiery speeches and patriotic songs, picketting the shops of British goods and adopting various other measures. While the Hindus abhorred the idea of the partition of their motherland, the Muslims of East Bengal (except some patriotic individuals), fondly hoping to get some privileges at the expense of the Hindus, supported it and sided with the Government. The Government tried to accentuate the difference between the two major

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communities of the province by various means. As a result there were Hindu-Moslem riots in some parts of East Bengal, especially at Mymensingh and Comilla, and the Hindus suffered a lot at the hands of the Muslims who were in many cases openly helped by the Government. This opened the eyes of the Hindus to the necessity of relying on their own strength and capacity for organisation in order to save their life and property and honour. They paid special attention to the physical fitness of their boys. Physical education was strongly encouraged by the leaders and guardians of youths. Organised attempts in this direction were made here and there.

Srijut Pulin Behári Dás, who had learned a new system of *la'thi-play* from the famous lathi-player Mártázá, and was a man of noble character and lofty idealism, opened one centre of physical culture at his residence at Dacca and began to teach military drill and *lathi*-fighting to a number of willing youths. I joined the party in 1906 and belonged to the first batch of his disciples. To spread the activity of his Society Pulin Babu asked the members of the first batch to open similar centres in different quarters of the town and appointed them captains of their respective quarters. The different centres were organised into one society, under the name of *Anusilan Samity* (literally meaning culture-association). Pulin Babu used to hold meetings of the captains of the different centres at short intervals and advised them to form themselves into a compact and dynamic body fired by common ideas and ideals. The immediate purpose with which they were inspired at the first stage was nothing more

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than effective resistance to Moslem attacks on Hindu interests. Special stress was laid upon building up the character of the students and growth of the sense of unity among them. Our number rapidly increased. We then began to adopt suitable means to attract public attention and sympathy towards our Society. At times we held mock-fights which were witnessed by hundreds of people with great interest. The students of our Society not only earned public admiration thereby, but also got training in mass-fight.

Meanwhile there were some fights between the local Hindus and Moslems in some quarters of the town, and the Moslems were severely beaten down everywhere, inspite of their numerical superiority. I remember one occasion on which many Moslems attacked one of our neighbours' house over some quarrel or other, and I with a comrade of mine stood against them; we were of course severely beaten by them with big *lathis*; but at last when I jumped into their midst desperately and dealt a hard blow on one's head, the Moslems seeing the torrent of blood pouring from the wound lost their wits and ran away. These facts added to the zeal of the Hindus and young men joined our Society in greater and greater numbers. Latterly Pulin Babu used to send many youths including myself as inspector to the villages in order to open centres there. Within a short period our Society developed into a big organization and counted many thousands as its members. For the inspiration and encouragement of its members, moffusil and local, games and physical feats of various sorts – such as small and big lathi-play, dagger, wrestling etc – were held annually and the winners received

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medals and prizes. On one occasion, I headed the list of sixty competitors and won the medal for wrestling.

Pulin Babu's imagination now soared higher. He called together all the captains and expressed the inner aspiration of his heart. He said "Our ideal is not merely sectarian, to repulse Muslim attack is not our prime object. It is only by the way. Our real objective is to free our Mother-land from foreign yoke. In order to achieve this end we should prepare ourselves, physically as well as mentally. You captains! you should first study revolutionary literature-study Mazzini, Garibaldi, French Revolution and other literature about the History of Independence. Watch well the behaviour of the students you teach, select the best among them and secretly infuse revolutionary ideas into their minds, ask them to study revolutionary literature, distribute revolutionary works among them." All the captains acted upto the advice of their leader, and as the nationalist spirit was awakened in every heart, the revolutionary teaching worked like a miracle. Within a very short period every centre had two divisions among its members-one inner and another outer, one revolutionary and another ordinary.

Pulin Babu selected particularly some of his disciples of the inner circle, who, he expected, would dedicate their whole life to the service of the Mother-land and who would never rest contented till the Motherland was completely free from foreign domination. I was one of these chosen few. Though I was one of the youngest of his disciples, Pulin Babu had strong faith in my character and potentialities. He

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used to lead his disciples, batch by batch, to the temple of *Siddeswari Ka'li*, in order to take from them in the form of a religious ceremony the sacred vow of life-long service to the beloved Motherland and perfect secrecy about the activities of the Samiti. There was a general belief among the Bengal Hindus,—and the belief was almost inborn in the minds of the boys and girls of the Bengali Hindu Society,—that a vow taken in the presence of Mother Kali was inviolable and that any wilful deviation from it was sure to be severely punished. Feeble-minded men were afraid of taking any vow or making any promise before Kali and still more afraid of violating it, if once made. Thus a vow before Kali had a special sanctity, a special strength, and made a deep impression upon those who took it. Pulin Babu, though a revolutionary leader, took advantage of the popular sentiments in advancing the cause he had in view. Kali is conceived by the Hindus as the Divine Mother of the universe. She is the supreme Power-Reality,—the infinite Source of all power and strength. She is the Slayer of demons (wicked self-aggrandising people) and the Protector of those who are devoted to the just cause and to the common good,—the Source of fear to the wicked and of fearlessness to the noble hearts. The very image of this Mother-God is awe-striking and inspiring,—it strikes terror into the hearts of those who want to exploit and oppress Her weak and innocent children and inspires courage and self-confidence in the hearts of those who proceed onward in the path of justice, benevolence, self-sacrifice and service to fellowmen. Faith in Kali implies faith in the moral government of the world inspite of

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all that we experience to the contrary. It implies the belief that *might* must in the long run submit to *right*,—wickedness must submit to righteousness,—though in our actual experience we find *might* trampling upon *right*, mighty wicked men ruling over meek righteous people. It is this faith which emboldens those who take up the cause of the weak righteous people inspite of their small resources and little strength. In Bengal Mother Kali occupies a unique position in the hearts of men and women amongst the innumerable Gods and Goddesses that are worshipped by them. In the minds of the people of Dacca the temple of Siddheswari Kali has a special sanctity; it is believed that the Image is very living there,—that the living presence of the Divine Mother is more perceptible in that Image than in many others,—that the devotees can get direct response to their worship and prayer to the Divine Mother through that Image.

At the time of which I am speaking the locality in which the temple is situated was a very lonely one. There was little human habitation round about it. People generally went there with believing hearts to offer worship to the Deity. This solitude added solemnity to the temple. The atmosphere seemed to be surcharged with spirituality, particularly to those who had a spiritual faith within themselves. One day I along with some chosen co-workers followed Pulin Babu to this lonely temple. Our inherited faith and Pulin Babu's inspiring words made us feel that we were in the presence of the Divine Mother of the universe. We were made more particularly to feel that this Mother

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was a living embodiment of the Soul-Power of *Bha'rata-Ma'ta'*, to whose service we wanted to dedicate our life. In obedience to our leader's instruction each of us took out some drops of blood from his finger and placed them as our soul's offerings before the Mother. Having offered our blood, we all with our eyes fixed on the Mother took the vow that we should dedicate our whole life to the service of the country and particularly devote ourselves for the attainment of its political independence, and that we should never under any circumstances divulge any secret about the activities of our Samiti. It was a solemn vow that we took with all the earnestness of our youthful hearts, with (as we then believed) the Divine Mother as our witness. It was an inspiring ceremony. I came to learn that several other batches of selected workers were similarly led by our leader to this sacred temple and were made to take a similar vow.

The readers will learn in the sequel that I could not remain associated for a long time with the Samiti, which itself was declared an unlawful assembly within a short period and that I could not on account of my spiritual hankering stick to the first and main part of the vow so solemnly taken in the inspiring presence of Mother Kali. The second part of the vow, however, was observed not only by these chosen few, but by all the workers of the Samiti, and this was severely tested at the time of the Conspiracy Case brought by the Government against the Samiti.

Now, when the organisation grew sufficiently big, Pulin Babu opened a boarding house, gathered together

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and accommodated about a hundred young men the sole object of whose life was the service of the mother-land and who were prepared to sacrifice everything and to undergo all hardships for this purpose. He utilised their energy and enthusiasm in propagating his ideals. Emboldened by the response he obtained from the youth of his country in the pursuit of his ideals, Pulin Babu secretly turned his attention to the collection of arms and money. He took into his confidence the disciples of the innermost circle. Various contrivances were thought of. It was evident that a secret revolutionary association must increase its strength and resources secretly. Theft was accepted as an approved means, since the end was so lofty and noble. Some weapons were collected by stealing. I remember to have stolen one gun from my neighbour's house. What we could get hold of by such means was of course grossly inadequate for the great purpose we had in view. Ways were devised and arrangements were made for the illegal purchase of arms and ammunitions. (specially from German companies of Calcutta). But a good deal of money was required for materialising the scheme. The maintenance of the Boarding-house and the running of the institution also required money. The money which the society received through subscription and donation could not meet the ever-increasing demands. The leaders of the organisation were at a loss for finding out sources of revenue. There was no hope of prevailing upon the rich land-lords and merchants of the country to supply adequate money in aid of such revolutionary activities. But Pulin Babu was not a man to miss the opportunities for raising a standard of rebellion against foreign

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domination on account of the want of lawful means of getting money for the purpose.

He devised a means which was not only terribly risky owing to its illegality, but also shocking to the moral consciousness of many of his followers. The doctrine of the end justifying the means was strongly propounded. Little efforts were necessary to remove all sense of fear from the minds of the trained young men. Dacoity was accepted as a legitimate means for acquiring money for the sake of the independence of the Motherland. 50 or 60 young men armed with guns, revolvers and swords were sent to commit dacoity, generally in the houses of those rich persons who amassed much money and did not spend it for the good of the country. On one occasion Pulin Babu ordered me to lead one party, which was to join some other parties at a late hour on the solitary bank of a big river and then to start together for dacoity. This order I could not refuse to obey. But I found that my heart was too tender to commit such inhuman acts. I was actually shocked and silent tears rolled down my cheeks, when I found my colleagues severely beating an innocent inmate of a shop for the keys of his iron-safe. However, so clever was Pulin Babu's programme and so organised and punctual were his followers that among many dacoities committed the police could not trace a single one or bring the offence home to a single culprit.

Now when the Government came to be aware of the aims and objects of this Society, they appointed many spies and special inspectors to watch its movements and ferret out its secrets. Pulin Babu also had

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his spies, who duly informed him of the activities of the Police. His programme advanced from dacoity to political assassination. He appointed with the utmost secrecy the pick of his devoted followers to murder some of the spies and inspectors. On one occasion I was deputed to murder an inspector of police who was a relative of mine, and I acually went to the place with two companions; but somehow or other it could not be done. However, in accordance with the programme fixed by the chief, many spies and inspectors were done away with by his obedient and zealous followers, and they executed their tasks so cleverly that not a single arrest could be made. The long arm of Law, however, could be held in abeyance only for a time; it now began to show its mailed fist. Finding the Society so organised and powerful, doing all kinds of mischief and evading the clutches of law, the Government declared it unlawful, deported Pulin Babu without any trial and disbanded its members in 1908. But the Society could not be destroyed. It had by that time developed sufficient life-power to sustain its existence as a secret organisation and to continue its unlawful activities, such as, dacoity, murder of police–spies, and collection of arms and ammunitions. I did not take part in the movement of this later period.

I have made here a brief reference to the first organised struggle for freedom in India after the War of Independence of 1857 (misnamed the Sepoy Mutiny) and the pioneer terroristic movement in East Bengal, because my truth–seeking idealistic nature and the circumstances round about me led me into them in my early youth and they exercised considerable influence

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upon my character and conduct in that period. But though I took active part in the boycott-movement, and belonged to the inner-most circle of the revolutionaries, my heart could not rest content with such modes of life and such services to the motherland. It is for this reason that I did not leave home and become an inmate of the said Boarding-house. My heart yearned for some higher spiritual ideal. I had heard and read that nothing but union or communion with God could satisfy the ultimate demand of the human soul. Whatever vague idea I could form of the ideal propounded in such sayings, was deeply impressed upon my youthful mind. I tried to regulate my life with that end in view.

Even during those days of my political career, I used to repeat the name of God whenever I had time and opportunity. Not a single moment would I allow my mind to remain vacant. Except when actually engaged in political and revolutionary activities, I would never apply myself to things not concerning my religious interests. At that time I used to utter the name of God with every dive I took in the river, with every morsel of food I put into my mouth, with every foot-step on my way to and from the school, and while walking along the roads. Here I am reminded of a memorable day, when I went to commit dacoity. I passed almost the whole night (in a boat) in repeating the name of God, not for any ulterior motive of avoiding arrest by the police. Though fear of being caught would now and then creep into my mind, I would never pay heed to it or allow it to get strength within my consciousness. I would drive out from my mind all thoughts except those of love for and service

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to my Lord and my motherland. I would with a heart full of devotion repeat the name of the Lord, even when engaged in revolutionary activities. I would think– "We are doing everything for the welfare of our beloved motherland, which is so down–trodden and bearing such a miserable existence. The results of our action depend upon the will of the Almighty. What is inevitable by the dictates of God must happen. That cannot be resisted or escaped from by provoking fear in my heart. This will only make me weak at heart and bring me sufferings even before the calamity comes. Thy will be done, O Lord!" Such thoughts would embolden me and fear would have no place in my heart.

Let me leave this topic here and revert to the description of my moral and spiritual gain which resulted from my boyish *Sa'dhana'* upto this time. During waking hours though there was uneasiness in my mind due to non–attainment of my ideal, still I had this hope that if I tried I should one day get it, This thought would give solace to and invigorate my mind in the pursuit of my practice. I came to feel myself more energetic in body, more courageous and peaceful in mind. Also I experienced that the culture of good thought began to bear fruits and even to spread its influence upon dream–state of my consciousness. My mind was not free from dreams about females; but in every case of such a dream I would automatically recollect myself and exercise the spirit of self–control. Thereby I could remain unaffected and undisturbed. I was overjoyed at this result of my devotional practices and this gave me a spur to my future *Sa'dhana'* which I continued with unabated zeal.

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CHAPTER III

Satsang and Vaira'gya

At this stage I happened to come in close contact with two gentlemen, who exercised considerable influence upon my thought and action and helped greatly in the determination of the course of life I should adopt. One of them was Janendra Bhusan Lahiri, Superintendent of the Revenue Board at Dacca. The other was Shashi Mohan Basak, Professor of Logic and Philosophy in the Jagannáth College, Dacca. These two gentlemen, though engaged in worldly duties, were deeply interested in spiritual matters and appeared to me to be above the ordinary run of worldly people in point of ideology and character. Both of them took special interest in the moral and spiritual welfare of young boys like myself. Janendra Bábu led a domestic life, while Shashi Babu generally lived with poor students, and spent almost all his income in feeding and educating them. Both of them were men of independent spirit and cared very little about the opinions of the authorities under whom they served. Janendra Babu, though a highly placed Government official, was ready to give evidence in the Court, if necessary, and testify to my good character and religious temperament in the famous Dacca Conspiracy Case, in which I was one of the accused, against the wishes of the Goverument, and was prepared to incur the displeasure of his masters for the sake of what he thought to be right. Shashi Babu would fearlessly raise his voice against the Principal and the College authorities as well as against the Government

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whenever he found them going wrong and doing injustice to the students. It was a period of constant conflict between the Govt. and the people, and particularly the young people, and they never sided with the Govt. against their countrymen for the sake of their selfish interests.

These two gentlemen, while having many points of resemblance in their character, differed greatly in their spiritual ideology. Shashi Babu, though a philosopher, was a typical *bhakta* (devotee) and preferred *bhakti* to *jna'na* as the means to the final fulfilment of human life. He did not believe that the study of scriptures and philosophical literature, however intensive or extensive, or metaphysical speculation and comtemplation, however well-regulated and sincere, or meditation on any abstract Principle conceived as the absolute Reality, however concentrated and strenuous, can ever lead any spiritual aspirant to Truth-realisation and perfect liberation (*mukti*). He thought that for the realisation of the ultimate Truth and the attainment of perfect freedom from all kinds of worldly bondage, the Divine Grace must be sought for and for this purpose the culture of *bhakti* or whole-hearted love, devotion and self-surrender to God is necessary. God should be thought of as a concrete Reality and a living, loving and merciful Personality. A spiritual aspirant should cultivate the emotion of love for God, should live and work for God, should render services to the creatures of God according to his capacity in a spirit of worship to God, should see the glories of God in all the departments of his endless creation, should gladly accept all

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the sufferings, which may eventually come upon him, as the blessings of the merciful Lord, and should shake off all self-centred thoughts, feelings and desires, as far as practicable. It is through the cultivation of such *bhakti* that the body and the mind should be purified and become free from all passions and selfish inclinations, the entire existence of the spiritual seeker should be saturated with Divine love, and he should experience the Divine Grace descending upon him and uniting him with God, Who is the Absolute Truth, Beauty and Goodness, Existence, Consciousness and Bliss. Shashi Babu was a devoted admirer of Shree Rámakrishna Paramahansa Deva and regarded him as the most perfect incarnation of God. He practised *bhakti* to God through *bhakti* of Shree Rámakrishna.

Janendra Babu, on the other hand, was an advocate of *Jnana* and was not inclined to give any high place to *Bhakti*. To him intellectual approach to God was preferable to emotional approach. He thought that emotion, by itself, was blind and might easily be misguided. Emotional love, though practised in the name of God, might, under the influence of the internal weaknesses of the human nature and the apparent attractiveness of the phenomena of external nature, be easily misdirected towards finite transitory objects and be a source of fresh bondage and suffering. Moreover, he thought, unless the idea about God was refined and enlightened, unless a true conception about the ultimate Reality was formed in the mind of the spiritual aspirant, *Bhakti*, however sincerely and earnestly practised, might have a false and illusory God for its object,

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might be directed towards a finite and imperfect person or thing falsely conceived as God, and in that case *bhakti*, instead of leading the aspirant towards unity with true God, would lead him astray from God and move him round and round in the world of bondage and sorrow. No confidence could be placed in unenlightened emotion. Emotion might have some efficacy in the spiritual path, but it must be under the guidance of intellect. Hence for the attainment of spiritual illumination an aspirant must carefully cultivate his intellect through the study of scriptural and philosophical literature, through thoughtful reflection upon the nature of absolute Reality, through careful discrimination between truth and falsehood, rightness and wrongness, beauty and ugliness, self and not-self, eternal reality and non-eternal realities, sources of freedom and sources of bondage, etc., and through deeper and deeper contemplation upon what is discovered to be the infinite eternal ultimate Truth and the highest ideal of life. Janendra Babu, though a householder, seemed to be of the definite opinion that a man, however earnest in his spiritual quest, could never realise the Truth and attain perfection without renouncing the worldly life. He held the view that exclusive self-concentration upon the Absolute Truth was indispensable for reaching the spiritual goal of life and with that end in view the abandonment of all connection with the family and the society and of all worldly concerns and transitory interests was urgently necessary. Janendra Babu was a learned man, conversant with both Eastern and Western philosophical and religious systems. He advocated his views with sound reasoning in an impressive manner.

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There was a yearning for good company in my mind at this period, and I wanted to come in personal touch with persons about whom I got good reports. I came to know from some friends that Janendra Babu was a man of noble character and deeply religious temperament and that he held a Gita class in the house of the Dhánkora Zemindar in the city. I began to attend his class and listen to his instructions. Soon his attention was drawn towards me. Intimacy grew.. I began to visit him in his own house. I got much encouragement from him in my spiritual aspiration. He deeply impressed upon my tender heart that all the wealth and honour and comfort of the world were nothing in comparison with spiritual attainments for the fulfilment of the human life, and that no earthly sacrifice should be considered too great for advancing in this spiritual path. The idea progressingly got hold of my impressionable youthful mind that all domestic ties, all social ties, and even the ties of patriotic service to the Motherland should be torn asunder for the attainment of salvation, for the realisation of the ultimate Truth, for the final fulfilment of the spiritual mission of human life. When Janendra Babu, himself a householder, gave me with all the enthusiasm of his heart lessons on *Tya'ga* (renunciation), *Vaira'gya* (indifference to all worldly matters), *Jna'na* (search for the Absolute Truth), *Mukti* (deliverance from all bondage and sorrow), etc., his wife would sometimes intervene. The elderly lady with her motherly heart would say – "Why are you putting these visionary ideals into the mind of this little boy ? Are you not virtually trying to turn him mad ? Will not such ideas puzzle his brain and

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put him off his head? Don't you realise how his mother and father and other relations will be seriously affected, if these ideas possess his tender mind?" But Janendra Babu would not pay heed to the expostulations of the motherly lady. I remember that one day he asked his wife plainly,—"Well, you and I have lived a household life for so many years; we had not to suffer intensely the pangs of poverty; in the eyes of the outsiders we are living with comforts and honours. But have you enjoyed true peace in your life? Can you sincerely say that you are wholly contented with this mode of life and that you want a repetition of such a life? Don't you think that the lives of good *sanya'sins* are far superior to and happier than ours? Otherwise why do you bend down your head at their feet? If this little boy has the potentiality and capacity to pursue the high ideal, he will do it. Otherwise he will move in the usual path. But since he is earnestly inquisitive about the true ideal of human life, why should he be deprived of the knowledge of ideal? If his destiny leads him to live a household life, even then he should not forget the supreme ideal of human life. What is the harm in imparting these lessons to him? His wife was silenced. I was attracted more and more deeply towards his teachings, though much of what he said I could not at that stage understand with my undeveloped intellect. He taught me to make a serious study of the philosophical and religious works of the master minds and to reflect upon their arguments and conclusions calmly and impartially and not to be led away by emotions or prejudices. He instructed me to be more an earnest

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truth-seeker than an emotional devotee. His instructions produced a deep impression upon my mind.

My acquaintance with Janendra Babu began before I got through the Entrance (Matriculation) Examination. When I entered the College with Logic as one of my optional subjects, I got Shashi Babu as my professor. I heard his reputation as a good teacher, as a learned scholar, as a religious man and a man of sacrifice. My mind was not at that time much interested in academic studies. I had no earnestness for securing good results in the examination. I was more eager to attain knowledge of Truth and to find out the path to salvation. I found deeper interest in the study of those books which dealt with the ways and means for the realisation of the ultimate ideal of life than in the study of books prescribed by the University. Even in the class-room while the professors were delivering lectures on their respective subjects I used generally to take my seat on the back bench and engage myself in the study of religious books. Somehow Shashi Babu's attention was drawn towards me. I also was seeking opportunities for coming in personal contact with him. Gradually we became intimate with each other. I began to visit him in his house in order to get lessons from him on subjects of deeper interest. I had in my mind the desire for reading under his guidance and with his help standard books on psychology, philosophy, ethics and religion, which might enlighten my ideas on problems of higher spiritual interests and develop my intellectual capacity for independent and impartial thinking on such problems. But when I came in closer contact with

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him, I found that this vastly erudite scholar did not attach much importance to the study of numerous books for advancement in the path of spirituality. He regarded it rather as a hindrance in this path. He laid far greater emphasis upon the culture of *Bhakti*. He warned me that extensive study of religio-philosophical literature and acquaintance with the mutually conflicting views and the arguments and counter-arguments of different philosophical schools and religious sects would puzzle my head and heart and become a formidable obstacle in the way of advancement in the spiritual path. He strongly asserted that logic would never lead me to the ultimate Truth, that no philosopher could ever advance any logical argument for the ascertainment of the nature of the Absolute Reality which was not refuted with counter-arguments by other philosophers, that God or Brahman was beyond the reach of the naturally imperfect and finite human intellect, which must move round and round within the domain of space, time and relativity. He gave me the warning that if I put too much faith in the power of the intellect and the formal formulas of abstract logic, it would ultimately lead me to agnosticism and block the way of spiritual self-realisation. He wanted me to put more faith in the power of implicit faith in whole-hearted devotion to and all-consuming love for the Divine Personality. He assured me with all the strength of his conviction that the sincere and earnest cultivation of such faith, devotion and love would progressively lead me to spiritual enlightenment, to self-realisation and God-realisation, to liberation from all bondage and sorrow of the world, to perfect fulfilment of the

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mission of human life. According to him, it was *Bhakti* which could solve the riddle of life and lead the human soul to the centre of all existence.

I was struck by the wide divergence of view-points of the two learned religious men, for both of whom I had high admiration. Janendra Babu warned me against the dangers of the path of *Bhakti*, and instructed me to adopt the path of *Jnana*; while Shashi Babu warned me against the dangers of the path of *Jnana*, and instructed me to adopt the path of *Bhakti*. The former wanted me to develop my intellect and seek for Truth, while the latter encouraged me to develop my spiritual emotion and to devote myself to the loving worship of the Divine Personality without any intellectual attempt to ascertain His true nature. The former asked me to make a critical study of the philosophical and religious views of different schools and to arrive at my own conclusion through independent thinking; while the latter advised me to avoid such a course and to confine my study to a few selected books, which might be sources of inspiration to me for the culture of *Bhakti* and might silence all doubts about the Divine Lord of the soul and all desires for worldly objects. Shashi Babu told me that he chose three books as his constant companions, which were to him unfailing friends in all spiritual difficulties. These books were (1) *Gita*, (2) *SriRamakrishna-Kathamrita*, and (3) Imitation of Christ. He advised me also to make a serious study of these three books of eternal value and not to puzzle my head by the perusal of a variety of books on different subjects, if I intended seriously to advance in

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the path of spirituality. He quoted his master *Bhagawan* Sri Ramakrishna and said that my duty should be to taste the sweet mango fruits and not to count the number of trees and their branches and leaves in the garden or to make biological and botanical researches about them.

Thus in the very early stage of my spiritual career I got two different kinds of instruction from two of my revered teachers. With my boyish understanding I somehow made a compromise between them. I went on cultivating *Bhakti* and paid closer attention to the study of the three books selected by Shashi Babu, but I did not abandon the study of other religio-philosophical works in which I found interest and the attempt to develop my intellect and to extend the sphere of my knowledge. Both the teachers, however, agreed in emphasising the necessity for the cultivation of the spirit of renunciation and non-attachment, the habit of keeping aloof as far as practicable from worldly affairs, the practice of *Brahmacharya* (self-restraint and specially the restraint of sexual impulses), truthfulness, fortitude, freedom from desires for earthly comforts, exclusive devotion to the supra-mundane eternal and infinite Reality. Such teachings made my mind more and more averse to worldly concerns and strengthened the spirit of *Vairagya* which was already present in it.

In accordance with the instruction of Shashi Babu I paid particular attention to the study of the *Gita*, the *Ramakrishna-Kathamrita* and the *Imitation of Christ*. The more I read them, the more was I convinced of

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the truth of the testimonials which Shashi Babu gave to them. They were really sources of great inspiration and encouragement to me. My intellect was not then ripe enough to understand and appreciate fully the contents of these universally honoured books. But as far as I could enter into the spirit of them, I was charmed by the beauty and sublimity of their teachings. The spiritual ideal of my life was determined by these teachings. They immensely intensified my attitude of indifference to the world and devotion to God. They filled my mind and heart with the idea that God-realization was the true ideal of life and that I ought to direct all my time and energy towards this end and aim. I was led to the definite conclusion that I should cultivate only such knowledge as might enlighten my outlook and help me in the attainment of the knowledge of God, I should perform only such activities as might purify my body and mind and refine my heart and intellect so as to make me fit for God-realisation, I should practise such devotion as might progressively absorb my whole being in the love for and blissful contemplation of the supreme Lord of the universe,—the One without a second. I was convinced of the worthlessness of all the grandeurs of the outer world and all the enjoyments of the worldly life. I felt that God-realisation was the only object worthy of being systematically pursued for its own sake.

I may briefly mention here some of the noble ideas which at that time particularly appealed to my youthful mind and heart and which on that account made these books so dear to me. I found the Gita full of the

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message of strength and courage and hope and self-confidence as well as that of faith and trust in God. The Gita starts with the inspiring command,—"Never entertain impotence, you Pártha (you man), this is not at all worthy of your dignity (as a man); shake off all weakness from your heart and rise up as a hero." Sri Krishna, the Divine author of the Gita, repeats this solemn appeal to the dignity and inner strength of man (Arjuna being a representative man) again and again in different forms of unambiguous language. He says that a man must deliver himself by dint of his own efforts from all that is undesirable to him (*uddhared a'tmana'-a'tma'nam*), and must never allow a spirit of despair or depression to get hold of his mind and heart. He adds that every man is himself his own friend and himself his own foe. He exhorts man to live a fighting life in this world with faith in God and confidence in himself. He assures us that a man who is sincerely and earnestly bent on doing and achieving good (*kalya'na-krit*) has no fear of being immersed in the mire of evil and holds out the hope that whether in this life or in the life to come he is sure to attain his wished-for ideal. He exhorts us to have faith in the Divine government of the world and go on fighting for what is understood to be a noble cause.

Another point which the Gita emphasised and which at that time emboldened me greatly is the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. I was inspired with the idea that I am the soul,—I am essentially a spiritual entity,—that I am above all births and

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deaths and changes, that I have no absolute beginning of existence and no absolute annihilation, that fire cannot burn me, a sword cannot kill me, water cannot wet me, wind cannot dry me up, that the changes of the body and the senses and even of the mind cannot affect me in any way, that I am not really confined within the body, but am all-pervading, above all temporal and spatial limitations. Such a grand conception of the soul is apt to make a man free from all kinds of fear, all kinds of self-diffidence, all kinds of weakness. Death is compared to change of clothing,—giving up the use of an old and ragged piece of cloth and getting a new one instead. A person realising himself as the soul never becomes old, never suffers from any disease, never loses the freshness of his spirit. He looks upon nobody as his enemy, since everybody is an embodiment of the soul. He fears none, he hates none, he envies none, he feels special attachment to none. Looking upon one's own self and upon all persons and creatures from the view-point of the soul is a magnificent ideal, which enchanted my mind and heart at that time.

Thirdly, I was most profoundly impressed by the sublime and beautiful conception of God as expounded in the *Gita'*. The author of the Gita does not describe God as a distant Being far remote from the world of human experience, having no relation with our feelings and aspirations, our duties and activities, our enjoyments and sufferings, or as an abstract Principle of metaphysical speculation having no direct bearing on our normal life, or as a supreme Ideal realisable only

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by a very few *rishis* or saints through superhuman austerities (*tapasya'*). He brings God down to the plane of human experience,—he brings Him very near to our mind and heart,—he puts Him before us as One with Whom direct personal intercourse is possible. The illustrious author identifies himself fully with God and describes Him in the most exquisitely beautiful language as the true Self of himself, the true Self of all men and all living beings, the true Self of the universe and all the diversities appearing and disappearing within it. He does not think it worth his while to prove the existence of God with the help of any logical or philosophical arguments, just as a speaker does not think it necessary to adduce any argument to prove his own existence to his audience before the commencement of his lecture. God is his starting point. He feels himself as God embodied in a human form. He speaks of God with as much certainty as when a man speaks of himself and his own experiences. The mode of his speech carries conviction in the mind of the hearer. He proclaims with certitude that God. (i. e. his own true Self) is the sole ultimate Ground and Support and Regulator and Destroyer of all the living and non-living beings, all the finite transitory relative existences of the universe,—that all men and all creatures originate from Him, are sustained and moved and regulated by Him, are led through different stages by Him, are killed and devoured by Him at the end of their career. All existences being from Him, in Him, by Him and for Him are essentially non-different from Him. He is accordingly the true Self of all existences and all

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existences are self-manifestations of Him. What we call unconscious existence and what we call conscious existence are only two mutually related forms of His cosmic self-expression. He is in the beginning and the middle and the end of all of them. The author of the *Gita* wants to bring home to us that our relation to God is not indirect and mediate, but direct and immediate,–that in our actual life we should not think of our connection with Him through any logical process, but we should feel His all-pervading presence within ourselves and in all phenomena around us. Every one of us should individually remember and constantly bear in mind that God is my true Self,–that I am born of Him, I am sustained by Him, I am given existence to as a self-conscious individual with the purpose of voluntarily carrying out His will in His world,–that my body, my intellect, my heart, my physical and mental powers and capabilities, my natural and social environments, all these come from and belong to God and should be devoted to the service of God. Everyone of us ought to feel the touch of God within and without. In order to emphasise our closest personal relation with God, the *Gita* asks us to remember and feel that God is our eternal Father and Mother, benevolent Nurse and Guardian, unfailing Friend and Benefactor, absolute Shelter and Refuge, that we can realise His presence as such if we are sincerely and earnestly devoted to Him.

Further, the Gita teaches us to realise God not only as the ultimate Ground of the world and the true Self of ourselves and all beings, nor merely as our

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Father and Mother and Friend and Protector and in terms of other sweet personal relations, but it also teaches us to realise Him in the beauties and sublimities of Nature and in the physical, moral and spiritual excellences of our fellowmen. The brilliance of the Sun, the soothing light of the Moon, the sweet scent of the flowers, the grandeur of the high mountains, the beauty of the flowing rivers, the fearless courage of the heroes, the soaring imagination of the poets, the austere self-discipline of the Yogis, the search for Truth of the philosophers,-all these are special manifestations of the glorious attributes of God, and the Gita teaches us to appreciate them as such and to see God in all such manifestations. This mode of outlook on the world we live in, if sincerely and earnestly practised, enables us to feel that we live and move and have our being in God. The whole world then becomes Divine in our eyes and our whole life becomes spiritualised. This is a grand conception.

Moreover, God of the Gita is not an indifferent heartless God. He is loving and merciful. His justice in the administration of the world-system is sweetened by love and mercy. He solemnly declares that however bad a man may be, if he is whole-heartedly devoted to Him, if he loves Him and surrenders himself to His mercy, He delivers him from all his vices and all sorrows which might justly result from them, transforms his entire life and He gives him true knowledge and liberation.

Fourthly, the doctrine of "duty for 'God's sake,"

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as propounded in the *Gita*, made a profound impression upon my mind. Actions are always voluntarily performed by men with some objects in view. No man willingly engages himself in any action without any motive,—without any idea of some desirable end. Men are actuated by different motives at different times. Can any common ideal of human actions be put before all men? This is a puzzling question. Ordinarily men perform actions for the sake of finite and transitory objects of their own personal enjoyment. Egoistic pleasure or happiness is their motive. But the society, in which a man lives and upon the co-operation of which his happiness largely depends, demands that he must not even in his own interest be too much egoistic and that he must contribute to the welfare of his fellow-members of the society. Accordingly the welfare of the society or the welfare of the nation or the greatest good of the greatest number comes to be accepted as the proper and desirable ideal of human actions, and individuals are taught to be actuated by such a motive in the performance of their actions. Thus instead of 'duty for the self's sake' the doctrine of 'duty for the society's sake' or 'duty for the nation's sake',—the doctrine of service to the society or the nation or the Motherland,—is preached as a higher moral ideal by the teachers of different nations. Patriotism is accepted as a great virtue. But actions performed solely for the good of one particular community or nation may not unoften be injurious to other communities or nations. Patriots are not unoften indifferent to and even hostile to the interests of their fellow-men belonging to other communities and nations. Hence more liberal-minded

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teachers preach the doctrine of 'duty for Humanity's sake.' They teach that whatever may be the special fields of activities of particular individuals, the motive of their actions should be the good of humanity, the good of man as man, the good of all fellow-beings. Many religious teachers and scriptures preach the doctrine of 'duty for the sake of life after death' or 'duty for the soul's sake'. They hold that the human life does not commence from the present birth and does not end with the present death and that it is not related only with the present generation of the society or the nation or the humanity. The soul of every individual has an eternal life. The good of the soul means the eternal good of the individual, and actions performed for the sake of this eternal good of the soul would as a matter of course contribute to the essential good of the society and the nation and the mankind. Hence the good of the soul should be the highest motive of human actions. There are other teachers who preach that the duties of human life should be performed without any other ulterior motive, without any regard for their consequences in this life or in any other future life, but for the sake of duty itself. According to them 'duty for duty's sake' should be the motto. Whatever duty may be incumbent upon any individual in accordance with his position in the society or the nation and his physical and mental capacities should be performed *as duty* with a spirit of indifference and not attachment to their results. The Gita places the human life on a much higher spiritual plane than all the afore-said ethical and religious doctrines do. The Gita teaches that though living and moving and acting

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in this world of ever-changing phenomena, man is essentially and eternally related to God, Who is the Soul of his soul and the Lord of his body and mind, and he owes all his duties and obligations to God. He has to accept as Divine commands all the duties which are apparently attached to him by the society or the nation or the Humanity, and he has to perform them earnestly and conscientiously in the spirit of service to God. Physical and mental enjoyments, welfare of the family and the society and the nation and the humanity, good of the soul in future life,–all these should be subordinate to the devoted service of God. Man is to consider himself as well as all other beings as of God and for God, and hence his life of voluntary activity should be entirely dedicated to God. Thus according to the teachings of the Gita actions should not be performed for the sake of any finite and transitory objects of enjoyment, either of the self or of others, either of this world or of the other world; but duties, which are incumbent on us at particular stages of our life by virtue of the particular positions we occupy in this world by the Divine will, should be conscientiously and fearlessly performed in the spirit of devoted service to the sole Lord of our souls and the world. The noble feelings of love, admiration, reverence and self-surrender should be cultivated and directed towards the Lord, Who is immanent in all beings of the world and also transcends them all in His infinite eternal absolute self-conscious blissful nature. Our whole life should be God-centric. All the functions of our life, cognitive, emotional and volitional,–all our domestic, social, political, economic, humanitarian and religious duties–all

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our thoughts, words and deeds,–should revolve round this one centre. Devotion to God should be the soul of all the activities of our body and mind. This magnificent conception of the ideal of man's practical life I obtained from Gita.

The noble teachings of Sri RámaKrishna–Kathámrita I understood in this way. God is the Supreme Reality. He is personal as well as impersonal, *Saguna* (with attributes) as well as *Nirguna* (without attributes), Sa'ka'ra (with form) as well as *Nira'ka'ra* (without any definite form). No characterisation of God is perfect and complete. In whatever way our finite intelligence may conceive and characterise the Absolute Reality, it must be imperfect, incomplete, partial and inadequate. He is above intelligence, above mind and speech. But as we must think of Him in terms of the categories of our finite understanding, and must worship Him in accordance with the conception which our intellect forms about Him, we ought to accept as natural and inevitable the differences of conceptions about God and the diverse modes of worshipping Him, that are prevalent in the human race, and even among the philosophers and saints and founders of religious sects. Even those who rise above the plane of finite intelligence in their deepest spiritual intuition must at the time of teaching others use the intellectual concepts and terms to make themselves intelligible to the truth–seekers of the lower planes. Hence in their oral teachings limitations of expressions are inevitable and consequently apparent differences in the teachings of different teachers also are inevitable. But we ought not to lose sight of

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the fact that all the scriptures and all the religious teachers seek to give expression to the nature of the same God, the same Absolute Spirit, the same ultimate Object of human worship. God is one, though the conceptions about Him may be various, the categories employed to describe His nature may be diverse and the modes of approach towards Him may be of different kinds. We should most carefully remember that it is the One, Who is conceived and described in numerous ways, and that all the diverse forms of religious discipline are intended for the realisation of the same Ultimate Truth, for reaching spiritually the same God. Those who worship Him as possessed of forms and attributes and those who contemplate Him as above all forms and attributes, those who think of Him as omnipotent and omniscient and as the Creator, Ruler and Destroyer of the world and those who conceive Him as the powerless actionless changeless absolute Spirit, those who adore Him in the male form and address Him as Father or Lord as well as those who adore Him in the female form and address Him as Mother, – all refer to the same Supreme Being. There is absolutely no ground for quarrelling about these apparent differences, which are only differences in names and forms and intellectual conceptions, but which indicate no difference with regard to the Reality pointed to.

Sri Ram Krishna makes clear his doctrine of the unity of God inspite of the diversity of names, forms and concepts about Him by means of beautiful similies. Just as the people belonging to different races and

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speaking different languages apply different names, such as *Water, Jala, Pa'ni, Aqua*, ect. to the same object, and just as these differences in names create or indicate no difference in the object itself or its properties, so the people belonging to different religious communities apply to the same Supreme Spirit such different names as *God, Alla'h, Jehova', Brahman, Siva, Vishnu, Krishna, Ra'ma, Ganesh, Ka'li, Durga'*, etc. and these names indicate no difference about the ultimate object of worship. He gives another example. A chameleon, endowed with the inherent capacity of assuming diverse colours at different times, appears differently to different observers and each person conceives it as possessed of the particular colour he perceives. All persons however see the same chamelion, though their perceptions and the resulting conceptions differ. In the same way, the Infinite Eternal Absolute Spirit reveals Himself to the finite empirical consciousness of different truth-seekers in different forms. Though they are blessed with the experience of the same Spirit, they on account of the relative and conditioned character of their consciousnesses perceive Him differently and each explains His nature as he perceives it.

His parable of several blind men trying to form a conception of a big elephant is also very interesting. Each of them perceives the elephant by means of the sense of touch. One touches the trunk and conceives him as of the form of a moving piece of rope. Another touches one of his legs and conceives him as of the form of a piller. A third touches his belly and conceives him as of the form of a big jar. And so on. Thus each of them

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touches the same elephant, but they perceive him differently and form different partial conceptions of his nature. Similarly on account of the limitations of the spiritual consciousness of religious aspirants, they get partial experience of the Eternal Infinite Absolute Brahman and form diverse intellectual conceptions about His nature.

By means of such nice appealing examples Sri Ramkrishna explains the reasons for differences among the religious teachers, the great philosophers and the recognised Scriptures of different philosophical schools and religious sects with regard to the nature of God and the ways of realising Him. He asserts that they all think of, speak of and experience the same Infinite and Eternal Supreme Spirit, though their utterances may be divergent, their angles of vision may be different, their experiences may be partial, their conceptions may be imperfect, on account of the inherent limitations of the human consciousness and conceptional power. He further asserts that from the spiritual point of view such differences do not matter much, provided the adherents of particular conceptions sincerely and earnestly pursue the Truth and discipline their whole life in accordance with their own light and do not cherish any attitude of narrowness, bigotry, dogmatism and arrogance and do not enter into any quarrel with others on the score of such differences of views. Every religious aspirant should develop in his heart the sentiment of loving devotion to God as he conceives Him, should worship Him according to the mode adopted by him, and should cultivate the feeling of love,

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sympathy and good-will for all men of all religious communities,—nay, for all living creatures, as the manifestations and embodiments of the Divine. This mode of advance in spiritual life would ultimately lead the devotee to the highest spiritual plane,—the plane of supra-consciousness above the intellectual plane,—and identify the human consciouness with the Divine Consciousness. This would also put an end to all bigotry, small-mindedness, bitterness and hostility in the field of religion, as well as the arrogant sectarian spirit of proselytisation. He proclaims with no uncertain voice,—"All paths lead to the same goal", "All philosophical views and religious doctrines are modes of approach to the same Ultimate Reality."

Thus I was deeply impressed by the grand idea of the harmony of all religious faiths, as expounded in *Ra'mkrishna Katha'mrita*. I was profoundly convinced of the futility of troubling my head about the particulars of the religious doctrines. Sri Ramkrishana Paramhansadev used to say,—"This world is like a garden of mangoes. We have come here to taste the sweet fruits, and not to count the number of trees and their branches and leaves; nor to spend our time in the observation of their colours and sizes and shapes, nor to dig the earth to find out the roots of the trees. Let us devote ourselves to God-realisation. What is the need of entering into the metaphysical subtleties or the logical juggleries or of quarrelling about the superiority of one conception of God or one method of approach to Him to another." This instruction deeply captured my heart at that time. I made serious endeavours to drive out

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all questions about unnecessary details from my mind and to devote myself whole-heartedly to the cultivation of love and reverence for the Divine, in accordance with the conception I had formed about Him.

I also learnt from *Kathamrita* not to pray to God for anything other than *Bhakti* to Him. I had somehow been led by this ideal even before my study of this sacred book. This noble ideal of my heart got fresh strength and vividness, when I found it beautifully expounded by the great saint in his characteristic language. Thenceforward during all the years in which prayer formed a part of my *Sadhana* I would never pray for anything else than whole-hearted loving devotion to God.

From *Imitation of Christ* I obtained the most inspiring instruction about *Vairagya* and *Bhakti*,—non-attachment to the worldly concerns and love towards God. "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity, save to love God and Him only to serve." I was impressed by the unsubstantial nature of all the enjoyments of the world, as depicted in this book. The only worthy ideal to pursue in this human life s perfect love for God and all-giving service to Him. Faith in Christ, I was convinced, does not mean the acceptance of the dogmas and the forms of worship of the Christian Church or the mere belief that Christ will give us salvation in after-life; but it means the sincere and earnest imitation of the life of Christ,—the systematic pursuit of the moral and spiritual ideal which was realised in His life. "Love Thy God with all thy heart, with all thy mind, with

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all thy soul, and love thy fellow-beings as thyself"—this was the central principle of his life, and to follow Christ,—to accept Christ in life—means to follow this principle, to make life full of love for God and all His creatures, and to give expression to this love through disinterested service. I was fascinated with this ideal of life.

During this period I studied Sankarácháryа's *Moha-Mudgar* (a hard stroke to worldly attachment), Bhartrihari's *Vaira'gya-Satakam* (one hundred verses for awakening the spirit of non-attachment to the world), Vijoy Krishna Goswami's *Upadesha* (sermons) and many other religious books. I also studied the lives of many illustrious saints of different sects, such as Buddha, Chaitanya, Nánaka and others. I read one book (*Ta'pasmala'*) in which the lives of many Mahomedan saints were nicely depicted and another book (*Jivani Sangraha*) in which the life-sketches of a large number of Hindu saints were compiled. All these books added fuel to my burning spirit of indifference to worldly affairs and yearning for God-realisation. I did not study these books for the sake of erudition or reputation for scholarship; I always wanted to obtain inspiration from them and to kindle the fire of spirituality in my heart. The study had its desired effect upon my life. My enthusiasm for advancing in the path of spirituality increased day by day.

I found in the lives of the great saints of all the outwardly divergent religious communities how strikingly they resembled one another in their abandonment of

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all actual and possible worldly comforts, in their strenuous struggle for mastery over worldly desires and passions, in their voluntary adoption of a life of poverty and simplicity, in their patient and persevering pursuit of the ideal inspite of repeated failures and disappointments, in their deep love and devotion to God (in whatsoever way He might be conceived) and in their undaunted faith in the path adopted by them for God-realisation. All of them regarded the spiritual world as infinitely more real than this world of sensible realities, and the spiritual ideal of life as infinitely superior to all economic, political and hedonistic ideals. Wealth and power, name and fame, family and society, pleasure and happiness, were nothing to them in comparison with God-realisation, and they easily renounced all for its sake. Their renunciation of the world however did not mean that they were hard-hearted or feelingless. Love, compassion and good-will for all men and all the creatures of God formed essential parts of their love for God. Some might be deeply absorbed in contemplation and meditation, and some might render active services to the society, but love and sympathy for fellow-beings are found to be a common feature of all spiritually-minded men and women of all sects. Such noble characteristics of the lives of saintly persons as well as the lessons imparted by them made a lasting impression upon my tender mind, and my determination to devote my whole energy for the realisation of God in my life and to pursue the path shown by these God-intoxicated men acquired greater and greater strength in course of time.

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Now my thought turned to another practical problem:— What should be the mode of my life ? Should I continue my studies in order to pass the University examinations and then become a pleader or a professor and lead the life of a good man of this world ? Or should I leave the college and the home, turn out a *Sa'dhu* and devote my entire time and energy to God-realisation ? Sometimes I used to sit in solitude and probe into my mind and ask myself – "What do you want ? Do you want money, position, prestige, honour etc. etc., or do you want God ?" Sometimes I awoke at dead of night and deeply searched my heart. Sometimes I could not enjoy sleep during the night on account of uncertain and restless condition of my mind. I took 4 months to arrive at a decision and ultimately I resolved upon leaving the College and dedicating my life wholly to the contemplation of God. I expressed my desire to Sashi Babu, and he readily gave his consent to my resolution. After 8 months' attendance at the college, I bade farewell to it.

Sometime afterwards I informed Janendra Babu of the abandonment of my academic career. He did not like it. He laid strong emphasis on the necessity of the acquisition of knowledge even for purely religious life and earnestly advised me to continue my studies at home for the refinement of my ideas and the enlightenment of my intellect. He impressed upon me the necessity of acquiring at least a general knowledge of the truths discovered by the modern sciences for the purpose of becoming a thorough student of Philosophy and comprehending the ultimate Truth behind and beyond the universe. He made me procure a copy of

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Ganot's Physics, and himself began to teach it. He asked me to go to Sashi Babu and to read with him Sulley's Psychology. On many occasions did I go to Sashi Babu with the book, but he never allowed me even to open the book. He would always sing the glory of *Bhakti* (love towards God) in preference to '*jna'na*' (knowledge of God), while I heard Janendra Babu singing the glory of '*Jnana*' in preference to *Bhakti*. I had a deep regard for both of them. Both of them had a deep affection for me and were earnest about my spiritual welfare. But their view-points were different and each wanted to guide me in his own way. I was in a fix.

However, this state of things did not last long. The burning zeal for *Sa'dhana'* within me rendered the further prosecution of studies practically impossible. It led me almost inspite of myself to devote the whole time at my disposal to the incessant repetition of the holy name of "Siva" and to the contemplation of His all-pervading presence ar lorious character. Only about an hour or so I used to spend in the study of religious literature. Sometimes I tried to concentrate my attention on a picture of "Siva" which I used to keep with me. At night I used to wake up to 12 O'clock. Sometimes I passed through lonely streets, always repeating the name of God. I used now and then to sit in a lonely spot on the river-side and engage myself deeply in *Sadhana*. Sometimes I went out to the forest of B'howa'l with only one blanket on to have experience o *Sadhana* in jungle (forest) life.

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CHAPTER IV

Search for Guru

By this time I imbibed a strong desire for placing myself under the guidance of a competent Guru. It developed in this way. Since my boyhood I had been hearing that without Guru no aspirant could ever reach the spiritual goal. "Verily shall a truth-seeker approach a Guru", – "Guru is one who hath realised God and is versed in Scriptures", – all this they said was written in the Upanishads, the last word on spirituality. The same in essence are the the teachings of the Gitá. "Realise Truth" It declares, "by intelligent questions and service and submission unto thy Guru". Kabir's Dohávali* lent support to to the same idea. There also I found the glory of Guru sung very loudly. The book declares categorically that there can be no salvation without the Light of Guru to illumine the path. Besides these, another influence continually fed my faith. I knew some of the disciples of revered Vijoy Krishna Goswami. From them I learnt that the real Guru (*Sadguru*) delivers his disciples from bondage in one or

* I remember now how I got this book. During *Ardhodayayoga* I accompanied my mother when she went to take bath in the Ganges at Calcutta. At that time being not familiar with many religious works, I went to a big shop and handed over the bookseller Rs. 5/– and asked him to give me some religious books. The book-seller knowing me to be innocent and ignorant kindly gave me five books in return, one of them was a big book-KABIR'S *Doha vali* with Bengali translation.

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two births, or at the most in three births. So long as the real Guru does not lead his disciples to the realisation of the highest ideal of this mundane existence, his own mission is not fulfilled. Having liberated all his disciples, the gracious Guru gets himself liberated last of all; just as a cowherd, while returning home with the cattle in his charge from the other side of a river, puts the cattle ahead of himself and then swims across the river along with the last of them. Having heard about the glory of a real Guru and his acts of grace, I began to feel more and more deeply the necessity for putting myself in the charge of a holy Guru for deliverance from this world of bondage and sorrow. Though I had not experienced acutely any sort of sorrow in this world, still the idea of the sorrowfulness of the world was impressed upon my mind and heart by the study of religious literature and the personal contact of religious men. I drew a dark picture of this world within my mind. All wealth and honour, pleasure and comfort, which the world could possibly confer on men, were regarded by me as of no value at all. Good in this world, I was convinced, was insignificant in comparison with evil. There was nothing here on earth which could be accepted by me as a worthy object of ambition. The only worthy object of aspiration in this world was to get rid of it, to renounce it and attain spiritual perfection. But emancipation from all bondages and sorrows of the world and realisation of the supramundane spiritual bliss was not, as I was taught, possible without the grace of a Guru, who himself attained this blissful state and was perfectly liberated from the world. Without getting Guru, I could never be

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delivered from sorrow and bondage in any other way. Such thoughts, continuously revolving in the mind, aroused in me a deep feeling of want and made me anxious to be blessed with the mercy of a true Guru.

I went hither and thither in search of such a Guru. I met the illustrious Pandit Sashadhar Tarka Chudámani who put up for a few days at the house of one of his disciples in our Mohallá (quarter)*. I used to go to him off and on and he received me with cordial affection. He was a great Vedántic scholar and at the same time an orthodox Bráhmin. He advised me repeatedly to have unquestioning and implicit faith in our Scriptures. I got from him some practical lessons on *Sádhaná* as well. But inspite of all my reverence and gratitude to him, I could not accept him as my Guru, perhaps because he was a house-holder and not a world-renouncing saint. On some occasions I went to Swámi Tripurlinga of Swámibág, who was a very widely respected Sádhu, and sought instruction from him. But on account of his apparently irritable temper and outwardly rich style of living, I turned away from him with a feeling of disappointment. I then went to Sháh Sáheb (near Fulbáriá) who was generally believed to be above a hundred years in age. I had met him previously at Dacca twice or thrice. His sweet behaviour, his tender affection, his simple advice, attracted my admiration and love; but the conception I had formed in my mind of an ideal Guru was not fully satisfied, and I had to

* Madan Mohan Dutta's house, at Cha'nnighat, Dacca. Madan Babu (father of the renowned Pleader, Nalini Mohan Dutta) was the famous Mukiear of Dacca.

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turn back disappointed. Frustrated again and again in my earnest attempts to find out a Guru after my heart, I felt sad and returned home. At this time I happened to meet one disciple of the famous Brahmachári of Bárodi. He sometimes put up at the house of the Zemindár of Dhánkora', who was his disciple. After some visits to and talks with him, I prayed to him for instruction about *Sadhana*. He hastily took me to a solitary room, gave me some *Mantra* and asked me to repeat it. I do not know whether he meant to make me a disciple or not, but I on my part did not look upon him as my Guru.

I however could not rest contented without a Guru. My search continued. I was told that many Sádhus could be found assembled at Kámákshyá. I started for that place, but could not reach there. Though my father was known to be a *Lákh-Pati* (owner of a lakh of rupees), I was not allowed to have a single penny for any religious purpose. I managed to travel upto JagannáthGunj without any ticket. There I met with obstruction and was not permitted to catch the steamer owing to my pennilessness. Baffled in the attempt I returned home with a heavy heart. On another occasion I was told about a Yogi residing in Calcutta. I wrote him a letter to which he kindly gave a reply. I went to his place, but could not meet him, because he had by that time left for some far-off hill-station. Again baffled, I put on a Sadhu's dress at Calcutta and started for Benares without ticket. Though I had to face some trouble on the way, I managed to reach the sacred city. An elderly Swamijee, observing my young

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age, kindly inquired about my motive and advised me not to proceed further in this fashion, because there was danger of falling into the trap of pseudo-sadhus. Sadly disappointed I turned back, halted at Buddha-Gaya' on the way and returned home. Having then heard of Purnánand Swamijee of Jagatpur A'shram in the district of Chittagong, I again left home and passed a few days at Chittagong and Jagatpur. The Swamijee's Brahmacharya – Ashram had two sections,–one of young men and another of young women. The proximity of the young of both sexes in the Ashram and the manner in which the old Swamijee mixed with his young disciples of the softer sex produced a disgust in my puritanic heart. He fell short of my ideal of a Guru and I returned disappointed.

Now Janendra Babu informed me of the arrival of a famous Sadhu, Keshavánand Brahmachari (Guru of Jnanánand Swami, the head of the Bhárat Dharma Mahá Mandal of Benares) and spoke highly of him and asked me to meet h m at once. I went to his place. His majestic appearance attracted me and I prayed to him for tak me as his disciple. He put some questions to me an complied with my request. He said "I am leaving this place to-morrow; I shall write to you after I reach Brindában (Rádhábágh A'shrama); you should go there on receipt of my letter and be my disciple." He added, "As you have imbibed a love for S'iva and formed the habit of repeating the name of Siva, your name shall be Sivánanda." After some days I received his letter, in which he asked me to go to his Ashrama. This time I thought that I should

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give up all worldly connexions for good. I went to take leave of my parents. My affectionate mother, who was a pious lady checked her agonies and tears and bade farewell to her dearest and youngest child, saying, "Be thou happy and progress in thy path." Receiving the passage-money for Brindaban from my beloved mother, I started from Dacca. I first went to Mánicgunj just to pay my parting respects to my dear Professor, Sashi Babu*

Now, Sashi Babu did not like that I should be a disciple of Keshavanand. He induced me to go to Belur Math and wrote a letter of introduction to Swami Shuddhánand. I went to Belur Math and stopped there for about a fortnight. There were many *Sadhus* residing at the Math at that time. I enjoyed the company of Swami Suddhanand and Swami Premánand. Swami Suddhananda and myself used to sit together every night upto 11 P. M.; he would give me many valuable lessons and encourage me in my endeavour for spiritual progress. I was much impressed by Swami Premananda's love and frankness. One day, while he was somowhat ill, he poured out his heart and said to Swami Shuddhanand in my presence "We have seen Thákur; we lived with him, what of that? What has occurred to us? What have we earned?" I was thus benefited and impressed by their company. But the mode of easy-living

* Sashi Babu used to live with his elder brother Rajani Mohan Basak who was at that time a Muktear of Manikganj and known to be a great benefactor of students. Afterwards Rajani Babu opened the famous Dhakeshwari Mill, the pioneer Cloth-Mill of East Bengal.

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of the inmates of the Matha could not attract me. However, on the eve of my departure, Swami Brahmánanda, after giving me some advice on Sadhaná said "Some days back we took some young man into our Ashrama, for that we were put to troubles; you also are quite young and your brother is a pleader; hence the next time you come, you should come with your father's written permissien.*

* My father late Nanda Kumar Datta was at that time an old retired gentleman, living permanently at his own Dacca residence. His village home was at Kha'rkhola (near Shekhernagar) within Bikrampur, the most culturally advanced portion (*pargana'*) of the Dacca District. He belonged to a cultured Ka'yastha family of the village and was the owner of a *ta'lukda'ri* there He is known to have been a good Arabic scholar. Before his retirement he had been engaged as an *Amin* (surveyor), in which profession he is said to have amassed much money. He was known in the neighbourhood as a master of a Lakh (*La'khapati*), though he had not much reputation for charity and social service. One of the big streets of the Dacca Municipality was named after him as Nanda Kumar Street. He was the father of three sons and three daughters. The eldest son, late Lalit Kumar Datta, M. A. B. L. a pleader of Dacca and for some time Govt. Pleader, was from the worldly point of view the most successful of them. In his college days he had been known as one of the brilliant students of Science in the University. He had been a rival fellow-student of the world-renowned educationist, Sir Ashutosh Mukherji, whom he had beat down in the M. A. Examination in Science,—the only examination in which Ashutosh stood second. I am my

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You ought now to go back and acquire more knowledge. You should devote greater attention to the study rit and English. This will be of substantial help to your own self-discipline and also to the cause of our mission." I was however bent on going to Brindaban. When I was about to start, one elderly Swami of the Math, whose veracity I got no reasonable ground for doubting, spoke to me something about the moral character of Swami Keshabananda, and uttered some words of caution. This changed my mind. I gave up the idea of offering myself at the feet of Keshabánanda and retraced my steps to Dacca.

At this period tw o apparently conflicting ideals of of life put me somewhat in a fix. One was the ideal

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father's youngest son,-younger than at least two of the sons of my eldest brother. My second brother, Aswini Kumar Datta, looked after Talukdari and had no issue. My eldest brother was not only successful in his profession and in the earning of wealth, but he was also fortunate in respect of his sons. He was the father of four sons, each of whom has attained success in the worldly life.

1. P. K. Datta, M. A., M. Sc., sometime Professor of Chemistry, Leeds University, England. He had carried on research on organic chemistry problems related to the derivatives of important Diazo-compounds. Afterwards for many years he was the Senior Educational Advisor to the High Commissioner for India in England (at present retired).
2. D. K. Datta, Engineer, P. W. D. Calcutta
3. J. K. Datta. F. R. C. S. (Edin), M. B. C. P. (Edin), the renowned specialist in Ear-Throat-Nose diseases, Calcutta.
4. J. K. Datta, Pleader, Dacca.

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of renunciation and intense spiritual self-discipline and the other was the ideal of intellectual search for truth and devotion to philosophical study. From my very youth I had the inquisitiveness to know intellectually about the nature of the ultimate Reality, of my true self and of the ultimate constitution of the world. At the same time I imbibed the idea that the fulfilment of life consisted in spiritual self-discipline and complete detachment from all worldly concerns. The ideal of intellectual pursuit of truth was strengthened by the advice of Janendra Babu and that of spiritual devotion got its stimulus from the instruction of Sashi Babu. I may mention here that both these tendencies were so deep-rooted in my nature that they continue side by side to influence my mode of life even in this advanced age. Ramkrishna Paramhansadev's spirit strengthened the attitude of indifference and Sadhana within me, while the recent advice of his spiritual son (Rákhál Mahárāj, Swami Brahmanand) for whom I had much reverence and admiration, aroused my latent desire for knowledge.

Having come back home this time I paid more attention to learning. I procused Upanishads aud several other works from different libraries. From the Dacca College Library I borrowed many books with the help of a friend of mine who was a student of the College.*

From the study of Upanishads I learnt that all the beings in the world come into being from Brahman (God), that they all exist in Him and by Him and that at the end of their phenomenal career they all go back

* Sachindra Chandra Chanda, afterwards he became an advocate at Pegu.

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and enter into Him. By this act of producing, sustaining and dissolving the world, God does not suffer any change or modification in His nature. The relation between God and individual being is that God is the Soul of all souls, the inner Being of all beings, the Indweller and Ruler in every heart. The realisation of this truth, the direct experience of God as the sole truth of the self and the world – is the ultimate ideal of the conscious moral and spiritual life of man. Life continues to be a life of discord, disharmony, disquietude, sorrow and restlessness, until and unless this truth is perfectly realised. No one can get rid of sorrows and fears and attain peace and bliss without seeing the blissful unity of the Divine Spirit behind and within the bewildering diversities of phenomena. The quest of God ought to be the highest duty of man.

After having read the Upanishads (with Sanskrit Commentary) and some philosophical discourses on them (Gough's Philosophy of the Upanishads), I studied Brahman-Sutras with Sankara's commentary (with big Bengali Tika by Kálivar Vedánta Vágish). I could not follow the most important portions of the commentary viz. *Adhya'sbha'shya* (Introduction – his discourse on the Theory of Illusion) and the refutation of the other systems of philosophy (the first two sections of the second Chapter), but I could understand other easier portions.

One of the important practical results of my study of higher religious and philosophical literature upon my actual religious life was that I came to look upon image-worship from a different point of view and my idea

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about the idols underwent a radical change. Formerly I looked upon them as really living gods, though I knew them to be the same God with different forms. My belief was that God Himself assumed different forms and mercifully revealed Himself before us in the forms of these Deities. But now I came to learn that God Himself did not appear in the forms of these Deities or Idols, but that they were mere symbols adopted by the religious aspirants of different sects for their own convenience in practising devotion and worship. God was not and could not be a limited Being with a particular bodily form, but He was an infinite eternal formless Being. But still to practise devotion or concentration, some sensible object, natural or artificial, was accepted as a symbol (*Pratika*), and the Divine attributes were ascribed to it. The practice of thinking of and realising Divinity in one such object might help the realisation of Divinity everywhere. This was only one of the methods of spiritual discipline and not compulsory for all. It was regarded as a subordinate form of worship. When I learnt this from the Scriptures, my attitude towards the images of God was radically changed. I lost my living faith in the supposed living Gods. There was a violent reaction in my mind, which practically revolted against them. This was an indication of my temper, which was uncompromising, which would either accept anything wholly or reject it altogether. I could no longer worship any idol. If the idols were not really Gods or embodiments of Gods, why should I falsely imagine them to be so and show any respect to them? I began to disregard them. Though sometimes on account of deep-rooted prejudices some fear would creep into my mind, specially

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when I passed by some temple without paying any homage, I would by the exercise of my reason and the strength of my determination, drive away the fear. I would strongly impress upon my mind that the idols were not God or gods, that the idols were artificial finite things of this world, that faith in God did not mean faith in idols and disregard of the idols did not amount to disrespect to God. This revolt against popular religion and popular gods was the first result of my study of the higher scriptural works. I learnt to put reason above faith, intellect above emotion, logic above tradition.

Now I began with my unripe intellect to ponder over the nature of God in the light of the philosophical scriptures. This world is experienced as consisting of entities which appear and go away – which have beginning and end in time. So these should be called effects. These effects must be due to some cause or causes, because we cannot conceive of effects without causes. Without reference to causes, we cannot account for the divergences of effects. Nothing can come out of nothing; whatever is non-eternal must have a sufficient ground for its coming into existence and its nature must be determined by that cause or ground; – this is a fundamental principle of our thought and all arguments about realities are based on this principle. As the production of a transitory thing must be due to some real cause, so its sustenance also must be dependent on some ground. A thing having self-dependent existence cannot die out, cannot be destroyed. A self-existent entity, if any, must be eternal. Hence all the objects of our experience, whether living or non-living, whether big or

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small, must be recognised as having only derivative and dependent existence. The production and sustenance and destruction of all of them must be due to causes or grounds. We therefore naturally seek for the causes of every object or event that we experience.

But the causes which we discover of the particular objects or events of our experience are themselves of the same derivative dependent and contingent nature, and must be products of other causes. Hence the question arises,—Is there any ultimate cause or ground of the world,—of this series of secondary causes and effects, which constitute the world of our actual and possible experience? Is there any entity which is itself not the effect of anything, which is self-existent and self-dependent and therefore eternal, but which is the first and independent cause of the chain of mutually related non-eternal derivative contingent things of this universe? Or is the chain without any beginning or end, without any ultimate ground or cause, without any self-existent entity from which it proceeds and upon which it depends? The acceptance of the second alternative would imply the denial of the principle of Sufficient Ground; it would imply the presence of a series of effects (though these effects are mutually related as causes and effects) without any adequate cause or sufficient ground for its production and sustenance. It would really mean that no causal explanation is found for this contingent world. It would be a philosophy of despair. This is unacceptable to a rational mind. Hence some uncaused cause, some ultimate Ground, some self-existent eternal Entity, must be assumed for

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satisfying the inherent demand for the causal explanation of the world of our experience. Now, what must be the nature of such a First Cause of the universe? What can we infer about the nature of this ultimate Ground from the nature of the world of effects that we experience? Should it be an unconscious Entity or a conscious Entity, a material Being or an intelligent Being, a blind Power or a designing Mind?

I found differences of opinions among the greatest thinkers and the recognized seers about the nature of the ultimate Cause of the world. I was however satisfied for the time being that the magnificent order and harmony of the world of experience, the wonderfully regular and adjusted course of its complex phenomena, the splendid beauty and sublimity of the great products of nature in the midst of the amazing diversities, could not be the effects of any blind force or insentient matter or unconscious substance. They must be the products of a well-conceived and well-executed plan and design and therefore the creations of a supremely intelligent and infinitely powerful self-conscious and self-existent Personality. Thus my conclusion was that the world of contingent existences must have an ultimate Ground or Cause and that this Ground or Cause must be a self-existent, self-conscious, self-determining, omnipotent, omniscient and infinite Personality. The idea of causation and dependence led me to the idea of creation and sustenance and regulation. The idea of cause led me to the idea of Creator and Governor of the universe. Thus a rational conception of God was formed in my truth-seeking mind. My faith was now based upon

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reason, so far as my power of reasoning was developed at that stage. I shook off my old faith, based on tradition, in the plurality of Gods and Goddesses, in the finite embodiments of God and in the rituals connected with them, because my intellect could not supply any rational foundation for this faith. But my faith in one formless God was retained, because my intellect was convinced of the necessity of assuming the existence of such a God as the ultimate cause of the world of experience.

With regard to the nature of the self and its relation to God, I formed the opinion that the individual self, being a finite spirit subject to happiness and misery, suffering from bondage and crying for salvation, limited by space, time, and circumstances, passing through particular states within the creation of God, possessing imperfect knowledge and powers, must be essentially different from God, who is omnipotent and omniscient, free from all kinds of bondage and limitation and sorrow, the absolute Creator and Ruler of the Universe. The doctrine of *Karma* was accepted by me as the most satisfactory explanation for the differences of powers, inclinations, enjoyments and sufferings of the individual selves (*Jivas*). If God, the ultimate Ground of the world, were held solely responsible for these differences irrespectively of the merits and demerits of the *Jivas*, He would be regarded as an arbitrary despotic Power and charged with cruelty and partiality, and as such He would be an unworthy object of worship. In order to evoke our admiration and reverence, God must be conceived as perfectly just to all His creatures. The

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Divine Justice is maintained to the satisfaction of the human reason, if it is held that God regulates the destinies of the *Jivas*, endows them with different powers and propensities, dispenses different sorts of enjoyments and sufferings to them, places them under different opportune or inopportune circumstances, in accordance with their respective *Karma*, i.e. the merits and demerits acquired by them previously by dint of their own efforts. This doctrine and argument on which it is based appealed to me at that time. This doctrine also led to the inevitable conclusion that a man must get rid of his sorrows and imperfections and must attain perfection and salvation by dint of his own *Sa'dhana'*, his own systematic self-discipline. Devotion to and meditation on God was accepted by me as the most effective form of self-discipline and I was inspired with the belief that my *Sadhana*, if carried on earnestly and systematically, would surely be rewarded with the highest good of human life, with the realisation of God in this life or in after-life and thereby with perfect freedom from all bondage and sorrow.

Now I read in the scriptural works that without the help and inspiration of a Guru, who had himself realised the absolute Truth and attained salvation, *Sadhana* would not be sufficiently effective, the dormant spiritual powers would not be fully awakened and the highest ideal would not come within the scope of actual experience. With these thoughts in my mind I again became eager to be blessed by a worthy Guru. I went again to Belur Math and stopped there for a week. At that time most sensational Alipur Bomb Case was going

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on; during my stay at the Math, the notorious approver of the Case, Naren Gosa'in, was murdered. The Sadhus of the Math seemed to be delighted at the deserved punishment of a traitor to the Motherland and there was a special "Bhándára'" (feast) on that occurrence. Even those who profess to be non-political cannot be altogether indifferent to the joys and sorrows of the country at large! At that time Swami Brahmananda was not at the Math. I met Swami Sáradánanda at Balarám Bose's House, Bágbázar. He refused to take me into their fold particularly on political considerations. Again baffled I returned home. After some days I wrote a letter to Swami Brahmánanda to which he replied thus "In these days of political agitation we are not willing to take anyone now.' To this letter I sent a very strong reply, in which I charged them with weakness and cowardice and bade farewell to their Society.

When I was thus frustrated again and again, in my attempts to get a competent Guru, a friend of mine* put my case to Barodá Kánta Banerjee, a disciple of the renowned religious teacher of Bengal, Shri Vijoy Krishna Goswami**. He took pity on me and called me

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* Sushil Chandra Ghose, afterwards he became Superintendent Engineer, Tala Water Works, Calcutta. (at present retired).

** He was an elder brother of the renowned Kulada' Brahmacha'ri. He was a pleader at Gaya where he became intimately acquainted with Ba'ba' Gambhirna'thjee during the latter's stay at Gaya before his coming to Gorakhpur. It is at Gaya that Vijoy Krishna Goswami met Ba'ba'jee (at Bara'bar hill in a cave). I found Baroda Babu leading the life of a *Va'naprasth* at Dacca.

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to his house. He said to me "I was a fellow-student of Lalit (my eldest brother), so I look upon you as my younger brother. Don't run hither and thither and waste your time and energy. You should accept Bábá Gambhirna'thjee of Gorakhpur as your Guru. I know him personally, our Gosáijee spoke of him very highly. Goswámijee used to eulogise Bába'jee in these terms "Such a great and powerful *yogi* there is none below the Hima'layas." Some time back, I remember, I had been told about this Babájee by another disciple of Gosaijee (Navadeepa Das of Fulberia). Now I was impelled by a strong desire to go to Gorakhpur and arranged to start for the place in course of a few days. Incidentally Baroda Babu was at Gorakhpur Math at that time. He introduced me to Ba'ba'jee saying "This young man has come from our land to lay his head at your feet." I bowed before Ba'ba'jee who appeared to be an old man above 70.

No sooner had I seen Ba'ba'jee's face than I became spell-bound. I felt no hesitation to accept him as my Guru. The spirit of revolt, which had been roused in me on some ground or other in the presence of the other great saints I had approached previously, was now nowhere in my mind. Such a profound, such a serene, such a tranquil face I had never seen in my life. Two days after reaching the place I received initiation. The purport of the advice given by Ba'ba'jee during initiation was this :- "Different sects of *Sadhakas* have the same ideal in view and they reach the same goal if they sincerely and earnestly pursue the paths adopted by them. So there should be toleration for all and persecution for none." He gave a ***Mantra*** the meaning

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of which was intelligible and a mystic formula, the meaning of which I could not understand. I put to Babajee this question "Who is Guru"? He said "Guru is he who delivers his disciple from bondage."

After 12 days when Baroda Babu was about to leave the place I also got ready to accompany him. While Baroda Babu had been taking leave of Babajee, Babajee said to him "Let Akshaya (my name) stay a few days more." I was encouraged with the belief that he would impart to me some newer and deeper instruction. He however did not give me any new lesson. He used to speak very little, and I dared not talk to him, his impregnable gravity stood in the way of my freely talking to him. At times I felt quite happy in sitting dumb before him, drinking with my steadfast eyes the sweetness of his divine face. His profound silence seemed to divulge to me more eloquently the high supramundane truths than oral instruction could ever do. His mere presence would clear away all my doubts. The joy which I derived from his meditative mood, his affectionate look, his sweet smile, his loving behaviour, words fail to describe. Rays of Divinity seemed to be always radiating from his eyes. One day after meals he asked me to take the remnant. That food contained fish. I was a strict vegetarian, but all my scruples took wings at Babaji's bidding and I ate gladly. From that day I came to learn that these things had no necessary connexion with the leading of true religious life. I shook off my dogmatic notion that without vegetarian diet no one could advance in the path of spirituality. However, after some days I got Babajee's order to depart and with his blessing I returned home.

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Note On The Sa'dhana' Of The Na'th Yogi

I give here a short note on the principal features of the Náth Yogi sect, to which, from the view-point of the sectarian divisions of our country, my Guruji belonged. This sect was organised by a great Yogi of immortal fame, named Gorakshanáth. The time when he flourished and the place where he was born have not as yet been definitely fixed by historians. That he was an extraordinarily powerful Yogi with miraculous powers of a high order and that he was one of the most illustrious religious leaders of Hindu revivalism in the post-Buddhistic age are almost universally recognised. Branches of the sect he founded are even now wide-spread in all parts of India and in some places outside India. In course of time the sect was divided into a number of subsects or *Panths* (12 or more), but the bond of unity among them is not lost. Traditions about Gorakhanath and many of his illustrious disciples and followers are current from Bengal and Assam to the Punjab and Kashmere and from Tibet to Ceylon. There are many *Maths* and *A'srams* of this sect scattered throughout this sub-continent, and thousands of *Sa'dhus* belonging to this sect are found wandering about in all the provinces and particularly in places of pilgrimage and in places where food is available on begging.

The Yoga-system is a system of physical, psychical, moral and spiritual discipline for the establishment of perfect mastery over the body and the mind and ultimately for the realisation of Truth and the attainment of absolute liberation from all kinds of bondage and sorrow. A man,

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so long as he lives what is called his normal life, which means a life of subjection to the body, the senses, the mind and the worldly forces, is not conscious of the immense powers latent in him. Through the practice of *yoga* these powers are awakened and manifested, and a man then realises the glories of his own inner nature. Having acquired control over his body, senses and mental propensities, he experiences within himself such knowledge and strength, such freedom from want and desire, such calmness and tranquillity, such beauty and blissfulness, as appear impossible in the ordinary course of life.

The religious culture of Nath–yogi sect has a *popular* aspect and *esoteric* aspect. In its popular aspect the culture of the sect consists principally in the ritualistic and devotional worship of *S'iva*, conceived as the Supreme Lord of the universe and the highest Ideal of the *yogis*, and also of Gorakhanath, conceived as the great earthly Incarnation of Siva. Siva is popularly conceived as a Deity among so many other Deities; and just as each particular sect accepts one particular Deity as supreme over all, regards that Deity as the ultimate Ground and Regulator of the phenomenal universe, endows Him with all the noblest qualities and with unlimited power and wisdom, and imagines Him as the highest Deliverer from all bondage and sorrow, so does this sect accept Siva as the Supreme Deity, the omnipotent and omniscient Ground and Regulator of the world of finite beings, the merciful Deliverer of all true devotees from all kinds of bondage and sorrow. The mercy and generosity of Siva are specially emphasised.

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Siva is equally accessible to all classes of men, from the highest to the lowest, from the most pious *Brahmans* down to the most sinful *chanda'las* or pa'riahs; –to the *Vaidikı A'ryas* as well as to the most anti-Vaidika non-Aryans. Siva does not make any distinction of castes and classes in accepting worship. The men as well as women of all grades of the human society have the right to offer worship personally to Him. No *Vaidika* or *Sanskrita* mantra is indispensable for worshipping Him. He wants only faith in and devotion to him. This sort of preaching by the popular preachers of this sect about the supremacy as well as liberality of Siva made Siva the most popular God among all classes of people, and particularly among the men and women of those classes which are deprived by Hindu orthodoxy of the right to take any part in Vedic sacrifices and to offer direct worship to the front-rank Gods and Goddesses of the Bráhmanical society.

Philosophically-minded *A'cha'ryas* of this seet are found (vide *Siddha-Siddha'nta-Paddhati*, a semi-philosophical work of the sect) to equate Siva with Vedantic *Brahman*. But unlike the non-dualist Veda'ntists, they do not regard the *Power* of Siva as unreal or illusory. They do not think that the phenomenal world is a false or illusory product of an illusory Power,–an unreal Máyá or Cosmic Ignorance. They conceive Siva, Who is the Absolute Reality in their view, as having a *static* as well as a *dynamic* aspect. In His static aspect He is Pure Spirit, Transcendent Consciousness, Eternal Immovable Being, and in His dynamic aspect He is Self-manifesting Power (*S'akti*), Intelligent Will, Eternal Becoming. Thus Siva or Brahman of this sect is Being as well as

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Becoming, Spirit as well as Power, Witness-consciousness as well as self-evolving cause of the world of diversities. In His dynamic aspect, in His aspect as the self-manifesting self-modifying Power originating and sustaining and regulating the world-order, Siva Himself appears as *Sakti*. Thus Siva is conceived as always One without a second and always manifesting Himself as Sakti; Sakti being Siva Himself in His dynamic aspect, His non-duality is supposed to be unaffected. In the culture of devotion and in popular worship, Siva is sometimes worshipped as the sole Lord and sometimes worshipped along with Sakti. In the former the unity of the static and the dynamic aspect is implied, both the aspects being mentioned in the *mantras* and hymns; while in the latter the two aspects are separately emphasised as two Divine Personalities-one male and the other female – eternally and inalienably wedded to each other. Sometimes *Sakti* (in the form of *Ka'li* or *Durga'* or in some other form of Mother-God) is specially worshipped, and Siva is put in the background; in such worship the dynamic aspect of the Supreme Reality is placed in the fore-front and attention is concentrated on it, while the static aspect remains implicit in the mind of the devotee. In diverse ways the worship of *Siva-Sakti* is widely prevalent in the Hindu society. Along with the worship of *Siva-Sakti*, various forms of *ta'ntric* rituals and *ta'ntric mantras* have entered into this sect. Among the spiritual aspirants of this sect, those who have inclination towards the culture of *Bhakti* think of themselves as finite and world-bound children of and as such different from

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Siva or *Siva-Sakti* and worship this infinite eternal spiritual Ground of themselves and the world with all the admiration, reverence, love and devotion of their hearts. There are others who have stronger inclination towards *Jna'na* (philosophical reflection) and *Dhya'na* (meditation); they think of the *self* as pure spirit essentially distinguished from the body and the mind and unconditioned by spatial and temporal limitations, and as such identical with the Absolute Spirit, Siva. They become not only indifferent to outer worldly concerns, but also indifferent to all forms of ritualistic worship and culture of emotional devotion, and they devote themselves mainly, if not wholly, to contemplation and meditation on the purely spiritual nature of the *self* and the identity of the individual self and the Absolute Spirit, of *Jiva* and *Siva*. We shall revert to these advanced *sa'dhakas* again in connection with the esoteric culture of the sect.

The esoteric aspect of the religious culture of this sect principally consists in the practice of *Yoga*. Hence this sect is widely known as the *Yogi* sect, and the great saints of this sect have become famous in the country chiefly by virtue of their *Yogic* attainments. The *Yoga* system is very old in India,—much older than Pátanjali, who is universally recognised as the greatest Acharya of Yoga on account of his giving the most systematic shape to the science and philosophy of Yoga in his *Sutras*, older even than the *Upanishads* in which mention is made of the earlier practice of Yoga. The practice of *Yoga* chiefly lies in certain forms of systematic discipline of the body, the vital organs, the nerves

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and the mind, so as to establish complete control over them, and in certain methods of development of the psycho-physical energy and concentration of this energy upon the desired spiritual ideal. Patanjali enumeratee and describes eight forms of *Yoga-sa'dhana'*, viz (1) *Yama*, (2) *Niyama* (3) *A'sana* (4) *Pra'na'ya'ma*, (5) *Pratya'ha'ra*, (6) *Dha'rana'*, (7) *Dhya'na*, and (8) *Sama'dhi*. His system is accordingly called *Asta'nga* (eight-limbed) Yoga. *Yama* and *Niyama* consist in abstention from such immoral thoughts, words and deeds as are hindrances to spiritual self-development and performance of such moral practices as are helpful to it. As these abstentions and performances are universal moral rules (*Sa'rbabhauma maha'brata*) incumbent upon all good and noble men, whether pursuing or not pursuing the path of Yoga, Gorakhanátha and his sect drop these two in their enumeration of the limbs of esoteric Yoga and retain the other six. Their system is accordingly called *Shada'nga* (six-limbed) Yoga. The adepts of this sect greatly developed various forms of *A'sana* (postures of the body and physical exercises for increasing physical powers and bringing the physical system under control) and *Pra'na'ya'ma* (suitable regulation of breath for bringing the nervous system under control and increasing the power of the will). The skill of establishing control over the psycho-physiological system and thereby of increasing the power of the will is regarded as the basis of rapid spiritual development. Sometime undue emphasis is laid upon these aspects of *Yoga-Sadhana'* and much time and energy are spent in the culture of these aspects. These basic aspects of Yoga-sadhana are not unoften misconstrued as constituing the essence of *Hatha-Yoga*. Since many adepts of this sect devote

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themselves almost wholly to the practice of various forms of A'*sana* and *Pra'na'ya'ma* and to the development of physical powers thereby, this sect is generally known as the *Hatha-yogi* sect. In addition to various forms of *A'sana* and *Pra'na'ya'ma* they practise many forms of *Mudra'* of which no mention is found in the Pátanjala system and which consist in some special exercises of bodily organs and the nervous system. They also emphasise the necessity of some special processes (called *Kriya'*, principally six) for the purification of the bodily system and maintenance of sound health amidst changes of external conditions. All these, though included in esoteric Yoga-sadhana, are regarded as subsidiary processes. The practice of these processes may lead to some results, which may strike minds of the common men of the streets with wonder and surprise. But such results are insignificant from the standpoint of Yogic culture. These processes, though sometimes unduly emphasised, are meant in the system itself for making the psycho-physical organism eminently fit for the practice of the higher steps of Yoga These steps are Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi, which are common to this system and the Pátanjala system and which with appropriate modifications have been adopted in the esoteric *sadhana* of almost all religious sects. Withdrawal of attention from all worldly concerns and suppression of the fickleness of the mind, fixation of the mental energy upon some chosen ideal object, continuous flow of thought in one chosen direction without any break or disturbance, perfect self-identification of the mind with the chosen object of meditation through intensive cocentration and final self-forgetfulness of the ego,-these constitute the

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fundamental principles of these steps of *Yoga – Sa'dhana'*. The chosen ultimate object of meditation of the Yogis of this sect is *Siva*, whom they also speak of as *Parama'tman* or *Brahman*, Whom they conceive as Absolute Spirit and the true Self of every individual and Whom they seek to realise within themselves through the intensive practice of the higher and higher steps of Yoga. When a Yogi perfectly realises Siva within himself, he is supposed to become inwardly identical with Siva, though outwardly he may live and move in the world as an individual among so many individuals. Yogic concentration may however be practised upon finite and non-eternal beings or relative and conditioned ideals as well. But such concentration, however efficient, cannot, as it is generally admitted, lead to the final spiritual goal of human life. Particular practices with particular ends in view may lead to particular attainments (*siddhi*). It is widely believed in this sect that as the results of particular intensive Yogic practices various kinds of occult or miraculous powers can be attained and many of the natural limits of human knowledge and capacity can be transcended. But it is also recognized that the attainment of such super-human knowledge and power does not mean the realisation of the ultimate ideal of Yogic life. When the mind, instead of being concentrated upon any relative ideal or object, is concentrated upon the Supreme Ideal, *Siva* or *Brahman* or *Paramatman*, and the whole energy is directed towards the realisation of the identity of the self with this Absoulte Spirit, then the process becomes Yoga in the truest sense of the term, and it is called *Ra'ja-Yoga* (king of Yoga). All true followers of this sect agree that the practice

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of *Raja-Yoga* should be the end and aim of every *Yogi* and that *Hatha-Yoga* should be practised as subsidiary to and so far as necessary for the practice of *Raja-Yoga*. They assert that without *Raj-Yoga* *Hatha-Yoga* is useless for a spiritual aspirant, and that without Hatha-yoga Raja-Yoga is ordinarily impracticable in as much as the psycho-physical hindrances in the path cannot be overcome.

Besides Hatha-Yoga, the Yogis of the sect also believe in the efficiency of *Mantra-Yoga*. They believe that repetition of and concentration upon particular mystic *mantras* in accordance with prescribed methods produce wonderful results and are greatly helpful in spiritual *Sadhana*. *Pranava* (*Om*) is regarded as the highest mantra, signifying Siva or Brahman Himself. The most effective form of *Pranava-Yoga* is called *Nada'nusandhan* (intensive search for and concentration upon *Na'da*, the subtlest and purest sound-form of *Pranava*). The *Na'da* (sound) is the continuous unbroken mystic sound (*ana'hata dhwani*) of *Pranava* (*om*) within the heart of man as well as the universe, representing in sound-form the Absolute Reality. According to the yoga-system, the practice of concentration upon the *anahata Na'da*, which is naturally present in the heart, and the habit of repeating the *Pranava* with every breath as the outer expression of the *ana'hata Na'da*, are one of the potent means for the illumination of consciousness and the vision of Brahman. Systematic concentration upon the *Na'da* within the centre of the psycho-physical organism,—within what may be called the heart of hearts—is believed to lead to the realisation of Siva as the Soul of the Na'da and hence to the ultimate ideal of Yoga. These in short are the main characteristic features of the sect-discipline of the Náth-Yogis.

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CHAPTER V

After Initiation

After my initiation I experienced a new line of thought being developed within me. Before I went to Gorakhpore I had come in contact with a good many disciples of Shri Vijoy Krishna Goswami. They looked upon Guru as 'all in all', they had the conviction that Guru was identical with God and was solely responsible for the deliverance of his disciples. This faith had produced a deep impression upon my heart. This notion became strengthened by my study of Guru-Gita where I found that Guru is in Himself Brahma', Vishnu and Shiva, He is the Supreme Brahman, He comprises all Gods and Goddesses, and that his body should be looked upon as the body of the Supreme Brahman and constantly meditated upon as such. The Upanishads, I found, declare that one who knows Brahman (God) becomes Brahman himself, – that there remains no difference between a God – realiser and God. It is further said therein that a truth – seeker should offer himself to and worship a sage who has realised the Ultimate Truth. The reply I received from *Ba'ba'jee* to the question with regard to the essential relation between a disciple and his Guru indirectly and by implication confirmed this view. Accordingly I also accepted this conception of Guru without any reasoning or reservation and learnt to look upon my Guru as my "all-in-all", as the sole master of my body and mind, as the beloved Lord of my whole existence. I found, almost to my own surprise that Gurujee occupied the place of God in my heart

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and became the sole object of my contemplation and meditation. I began to meditate on the form of Guru, instead of that of Siva or any other Deity. I tried to see his hand, to discover his glory, to feel his grace in every affair of my life. I experienced a new life poured into my bosom. I devoted myself to *Sa'dhana'* in accordance with Guru's instruction with redoubled strength. I practised *Japa* (repetition of *mantra*) with meditation 18 hours a day regularly. I did not go to bed till 2 O'clock at night and did not sleep for more than four hours. I took only two hours to finish all other business. This practicc I continued for 4 or 5 months at home.

I may note here that either at the time of initiation or during the period I stayed with Guruji after initiation, he did not impart to me any special instruction or order with regard to *Japa* or meditation or any other form of *sadhana*. The only instruction he gave me of his own accord was to remember the spirit of the mystic formula, the meaning of which, as I have stated before, was unintelligible to me. Though a young man of revolutionary spirit, I had not the courage to ask him about the deeper spiritual significance, if any, of that mystic formula. I however repeated in my mind the words of the formula. For constant *Japa* I took the other *mantra*, the meaning of which I claimed to understand and in which, according to my interpretation, the identity of Siva and Guru was implied. For meditation I took the visible form of Guruji, in accordance with my own idea that Guru was the embodied Siva or Brahman and Guru's body was really the

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body of the Supreme Lord. Once I appeared before Guruji and asked his approval for my meditating on his bodily form. He merely signified his approval by saying that I might do it if I liked. He would perhaps signify similar approval, if I would like to meditate on any accepted form of Siva or Krishna or Ráma or any other God or Goddess. He would probably wish that whatever form I would adopt for my meditation should be contemplated as a form of God Himself, and not as a form of any particular Deity distinct from other particular Deities. Perhaps by showing this absence of partiality to any particular Divine Form he wanted indirectly to impress upon my mind that God has no specific bodily form, so grossly limited in space and time and subject to change and decay, that any form may be imagined as Divine in as much as God is immanent in all, and that contemplation on any chosen Form imagined as Divine is only a secondary means for the practice by a novice of concentration on the Divine Spirit. But in my youthful earnestness for *sadhana* I had no time or inclination to exercise my power of logical judgment upon what he might or might not mean to suggest by his simple and unassertive mode of teaching. When I got his tacit approval for my desire to meditate on his physical form as the Divine Body, I was satisfied and I devoted myself to it. Thus continuous *Japa* of the simpler *mantra* and meditation on the physical form of Guruji conceived as Divine constituted at this stage the central features of my spiritual practice. Along with this, I went on cultivating purity of body and heart and the spirit of non-attachment and renunciation.

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Further, I tried to shake off all sectarian bias and prejudices and all kinds of narrowness and bigotry.

I may narrate here a few marked changes which I experienced in my mind during this period. (1) Previously I had strong faith in the existence of God and unquestioning conviction about His nature. But now my faith and conviction were based on some logical grounds, which I obtained from the religious books I studied and which at that stage of my intellectual development appeared to be quite convincing to me. My naturally inquisitive mind found satisfaction in the rational arguments put forward by theistic thinkers for proving the existence of God and ascertaining the glories of Divine character. (2) From what I had been hearing about the necessity for a *Sad-Guru* I had imbibed a deep yearning for laying myself at the feet of a perfectly enlightened saint and devoting myself to *Sadhana* under his guidance. This yearning was now satisfied and I felt great joy within myself. I now thought that the spiritual power of the *Sad-Guru* would operate within my soul so effectively that it would be a smooth sailing for me to arrive at the spiritual goal. My faith in the Guru and hope for spiritual enlightenment became a source of new inspiration and gave a strong impetus to my *Sadhana*. (3) My mind became more alert to its own weaknesses and defects, and more earnest for getting rid of them. I thought that two evils were prominent in my character, viz., fickleness and corruptibility. To get rid of the first I tried to withdraw my attention from all objects of thought and experience except the one that I chose to pursue with all my energy and I concentrated

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my thought more and more deeply upon this one object. To conquer the second I attempted to strengthen my will and purify my ideas, desires and feelings by the incessant cultivation of purity in thought, word and deed and by keeping my ideal always vividly present before my mind's eye. (4) As the result of my study and contemplation and contact with thoughtful men of different views, my mind became more analytic than before. I could not now accept anything on mere faith. Faith has a peculiar beauty of its own. It makes men blind to all other views and fanatically attached to their own convictions. It gives them some amount of strength and tenacity for pursuing unquestioningly the object of their choice. But the growth of rationality creates doubts, loosens the faith, puts the matters of conviction to logical tests and makes men somewhat hesitating in their movements. This I experienced at this stage of my mental development. Previously I had been more a man of faith than a man of reason; but now I became more a man of reason than a man of faith. Hence I began to examine rationally every step that I fe t inclined to take, to review my mental conditions with a scrutinizing attitude, to practise searching self-judgement on every occasion and to seek for rational grounds for every religious opinion and practice. This attitude deprived me of the joy and strength of blind faith on the one hand, but on the other hand gave me greater joy and strength when I discovered the rational ground of any truth. (5) As the result of the continuous practice of high thinking, purity of speech and action and concentration of mind, some brightness was at this time visible on my face and this was noticeable to those who came in

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personal contact with me. (6) Previously I would feel that whenever the rise of latent corrupt desires would lead to foul dream, there would arise simultaneously an impulse to check it, and this impulse was strengthened by constant cultivation of good thoughts. But now I experienced something more. The recurrence of currupt dreams became rarer and rarer. Previously I had no hand over them, but now I acquired much control over them.

Here I may note down some of my experiences in *Sadhana* itself. Though I had been all along devoted to Bhakti-Sadhana, I did not, as a rule, prefer emotional love (*Prema*) to serenity born of deep mental concentration. Naturally I had more leaning towards concentration (*Dhya'na*) than to emotional outbursts. Still I felt some difference between my previous Sadhana and the same during these months. Previously I used to devote my energy more to the repetition of the Divine Name than to the practice of concentration. Now that I made more serious attempt at concentration by sitting in one posture for a long time, the latent desires began to rise more vehemently. Sometimes such thoughts would arise in my mind that I would wonder and feel at a loss to find that such corrupt thoughts could reside in my heart. Sometimes the current of undesirable thoughts would carry me so far away that I would become conscious of it after a pretty long period. As soon as I became conscious of it, I would leave it off, would concentrate my mind afresh upon the repetition of *Mantra* and take fresh resolution not to allow such thoughts to occupy my mind in future. I would watch my

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mind so that it might not be distracted from my object of contemplation. Sometimes I would think within myself—'Is it not more profitable that I should have the normal state of mind occupied with diverse kinds of good thoughts than this serious attempt at concentration, which is often disturbed and puzzled by the rise of the violent waves of thoughts, feelings and desires? But counter-thoughts would arise—'If I pass my time as a normal gentleman without strong and systematic endeavours for self-discipline, there will never come any stage in my life when I should acquire perfect mastery over my mind. Hence I concluded that though it seemed so very difficult to stem the surging tide of desires, I must not run away in despair, I must go on fighting and struggling to the last.' So thinking, being well aware of the strength of desires I began to make a very bold effort to suppress them. Sometimes during practice in the sitting posture I would fall into sleep; I tried to discover some way to get rid of this weakness. Just before sleep I would exhort my mind to be alert and watchful against falling a victim to sleep. I would tell my mind, "Why should you allow sleep to intrude upon you, at a time when it is most unwelcomed and unwanted?" Such repeated warning to the mind had its desired effect. Sleep was to some extent frightened away. After continued incessant effort for a period of 18 hours daily during four or five months to check the rise of stormy desires I experienced for the first time in my life the serene calmness which was the object of my pursuit. But that experience would not last long. I was however encouraged to think that if I continued my practice for a long time I would experience that blissful state for longer

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and longer periods. This thought would act as a spur to my future practice. The very idea of such a calm and tranquil, happy and blissful life in waking as well as in dream would add to my zeal and fervour for self-discipline.

Let me now describe the gradual unfoldment of the stages of concentration which I experienced at that time. At first when I began the practice of concentration, various thoughts, feelings and desires would disturb my mind and I had to make strenuous efforts to check them and to fix my attention on the object of my contemplation. At the second stage my will became stronger than the spontaneous thoughts, feelings and desires; it could easily check them and fix the mind upon the same object. At the third stage this concentration of the mind on the Divine Object became deeper and more durable. In the first stage there was struggle on my part, but the mind could not grasp its objective, in the second the mind could, but only for a moment, stick to the object of contemplation, and the next moment it lost its hold and got disturbed. The flow of concentration which I experienced in the second stage had been absent in the first, but, that flow I felt was broken. In the third stage, however, that flow, I clearly perceived, was growing even and unbroken. This experience I would have for a very short period, and that also not deep enough. From my experience during that time I could not know what would happen afterwards, how the concentration would become deeper and attain to succeeding stages and what I should realize there. From what I experienced I could be aware that at first

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several thoughts having objective reference awoke in my mind, I tried hard to forget or check them down as well as to get my mind concentrated on my object of contemplation. As the incessant struggle went on, I felt that the diversion to outside objects became weaker and weaker. After long-continued practice I experienced a state, in which my mental function became very subtle,—thoughts, desires and imaginations came to a great extent under the subjection of my strong resolution,—and I enjoyed an unprecedented sweetness and serenity within myself. It was then that I realized that the efficacy of *Sa'dhana'* lay in conscious struggle to suppress the thoughts and desires and to attain to deeper and deeper mental calmness and tranquillity.

After four or five months of such continuous struggle at home I went to Gorakhpur again. At present I cannot adequately explain why I left that struggle and that coveted state of mental serenity and undertook the long and troublesome journey. I may be disposed at present to call it a mistake on my part; but I must have felt some urge within myself at that time. Most probably, my intense love and reverence for Gurujee was the reason for it. Perhaps this thought came into my mind that I should closely observe the glorious meditative mood of Ba'ba'jee, which would give me a powerful inspiration and effective guidance for advancing further in the path of deep meditation. Perhaps I was also much influenced by scriptural sayings and the utterances of good persons whose companionship I enjoyed at that time, about the spiritual significance of service to Guru Deva, and I thought I should gain more by

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serving the holy feet of my most revered Gurujee than by mere contemplation and meditation.

This time I came into closer contact with Babajee; I obtained the privilege of rendering bodily services to him. At night when he would lie down on bed, I used to massage his hands and feet. I would continue this service with great pleasure till he gave me orders to retire and take rest. It would not unoften occur that he passed into sleep and I went on doing my part up to 1 or 2 at night, because I would not depart without obtaining his express orders. Sometimes the person engaged permanently in his service would ask me to purchase raw-materials in the market at a distance of about 2 miles from the *A'shram* and to return within a few minutes. I would run to and back from the market with the articles within the specified period, so that they might be cooked and served to Guru Ma'hara'j just in the proper time.

A duty of another kind now fell upon me. Though Ba'ba' Gambhirna'th had got the wide-spread reputation of having realised God and attained the state of a *Jivan-Mukta Maha'purusha* (a great saint who attained salvation and transcended the world while living in the gross body), he had long refused to accept the position of a Guru, to take the responsibility of guiding truth-seekers in the spiritual path. I was perhaps the first lay-disciple to be blessed with initiation by him. The news that the great saint, of whom the illustrious religious teacher, Mahátmá Vijoy Krishna Goswami had spoken so highly, consented at last to accept spiritual aspirants as his disciples, was received with

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enthusiasm by many of my friends and was soon spread in the circle of those who had a yearning for initiation. A large number of religiously-minded Bengali people, who had already been inspired with a high admiration for him, became earnestly desirous of receiving *Mantra* from him and they expressed their desire through letters. While I was at Gorakhpur, it became one of my duties to interpret these Bengali letters to Babajee in my own broken Hindi and sometimes at the request of my friends to plead for them and to persuade Babajee to take mercy on them. At first Babajee refused to accept more disciples, saying पलटन् बनाकर क्या करेंगे ? "What is the use of forming a battalion ? I continued my advocacy in favour of my eager friends. Though a saintly man of strong principles, he had a very soft and tender heart within. He could not, so it seemed, resist the repeated appeals to his mercy. He saw the cares and anxieties and troubles and sufferings of the worldly people and his loving heart would very much like that they should be emancipated from them. It was his well-formed habit of dwelling in the region of Infinite and Eternal Peace that seemed to have held his feeling of love and mercy for the worldly people in abeyance. But when his attention was again and again dragged down to the sufferings of the people and to their yearnings for deliverance and when requests after requests poured in for his kind help, his tender feelings were roused and his heart appeared to have melted. He then began to grant permission to selected persons to come to him and take initiation. One by one their number increased. I myself with my youthful enthusiasm was

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instrumental in introducing a good many of my earnest friends to him and helping them to be blessed with his mercy.

Now having surrendered myself to the feet of the great Yogi, I spared no pains to live the life of a true disciple. I always acted according to Guru's orders, expressed or implied, and never otherwise. I put up at Gorakhpur as long as he of his own accord did not give orders for departure. I could not however stay there for a sufficiently long time because of the constant troublesome attention of the police. Apprehending further troubles, Guruji thought it advisable for me to return home and I obeyed his command.

Ba'ba'jee would generally speak very little. Extraordinary gravity was his most noticeable characteristic. He would always appear to be dwelling in some far-off supramúndane region. So I could not pluck up courage to discuss with him any controversial subject. I would feel hesitation to put to him any question relating to *sadhana* or *taiwa*. Hence I could not make myself enlightened intellectually from his company. But I experienced an inward happiness at the thought that I got the opportunity of living in the glorious presence of such a perfect embodiment of spirituality and the privilege of rendering services to him. I would hold conversations with other wandering *Sadhus* (monks) frequenting the temple (Gorakhnáth temple). I had much inquisitiveness to be aware of their experiences in Sadhu-life, to hear the tales of their travels in far-off lands, their experiences of joys and sorrows during itinerant days and especially the most interesting

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incidents which immediately led them to their renouncing home and everything beloved. Sometimes I had some talks with some of my co-disciples, mainly about Babajee.

Owing to these causes my practice of concentration and *japa* of the Divine Name became somewhat slack. I would not of course allow my mind to remain vacant at any time. I would go on with the practice whenever I was not otherwise engaged. But I experienced that I could not continue in the same posture and keep my attention fixed upon the object of my meditation for a sufficiently long time. I did not feel within myself that calmness and serenity which I had experienced at home. I found that I lost that meditative mood and joyful tranquillity of mind, which I had earned by my previous practice. Then I could realise that the fruits of *Sadhana* could not be relied upon like the money hoarded in the iron chest. If on any account a *Sadhaka* slackens his practice even after attaining a desirable state of spiritual consciousness, he soon loses that state, worldly thoughts, feelings and desires again bring his mind down to the lower planes. A fresh struggle becomes necessary to curb these thoughts, feelings and desires and to raise the mind to the higher plane of calmness and tranquillity. A *Sadhaka* is therefore required to remain always cautious upto the end of his spiritual journey. *Sadhana* has to be accepted as a lifelong warfare. A *Sadhaka* has to live the life of an ever-vigilant warrior. He can never afford to be careless or light-minded. It should be remembered that the forces of the world are constantly trying to retain their

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supremacy over the human consciousness, and that it is only by continuous fighting that they can be subdued or driven off. They are never wholly dead. Hence a *Sadhaka* can never remain content with once or twice experiencing the bliss of a high state of spirituality. If he slackens his fighting spirit, he will again fall a victim to the worldly thoughts, feelings and desires. It should however be noted that when the fighting spirit is sufficiently powerful and attains mastery over the worldly forces, external as well as internal, the consciousness of fighting disappears and the bliss of perfect calmness and tranquillity is enjoyed. This calmness does not indicate the absence of the fighting spirit, but its self-fulfilment. This truth was revealed to me when I found that though residing in the presence of such a divine personality I lost my previous state of calmness and capacity for *Sadhana* on account of the comparative slackening of my spiritual fight.

I was of course feeling quite happy in the holy atmosphere of the A'shrama and in the company of Babaji and the other *Sadhus*; but this happiness was altogether different from the peace acquired from long struggle of meditation which really laid the axe at the root of worldly thoughts, feelings and desires and brought about a real transformation of the mind. I learnt from practical experience that the very high notion which I entertained about the spiritual influence of *Gurujee's Darshan* (sight) was not founded on solid facts. The mere physical sight of a spiritually enlightened person ought not to have been expected to lead another to spiritual enlightenment. Of course by observing the

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inspiring meditative mood which had become almost natural in Babajee due to long and systematic practice, the spirit of the practice of meditation would awaken in my heart, and enhance my enthusiasm for *Sadhana*; and I would also resolve that in future I should also attain to such a profoundly calm and serene state of mind. But I could then realise that by this well-wishing thought alone the inner disease was not to be healed, rather it would remain as it was by not being regularly and methodically treated. Hence I came to know that in order to make progress in SADHANA I was to rely on my own personal effort; in this matter Babajee's mere *Darshan* was of no avail.

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CHAPTER VI

Peeps Into Divergent Religious Views.

After returning home, I began afresh the study of Bhakti-literature (books on devotion towards God), as an aid to my advancement in the path chalked out for me by my Guru, as I then understood it. I studied *Chaitanya Charita'mrita*, *Bha'gavata* and many other *Vaishnava* works. I learnt Guru-Mukhi language from two Punjabi gentlemen and studied some portions of the Granth Sáheb in the original. After the study of these works I again found a change taking place in my conception about God. I had great faith in Shree Chaitanya and Shree Nának, and their teachings, as embodied in the books, produced a deep impression on my mind. Conception of God which I formerly held on the ground of my own reason and meagre study and fostered by the precepts and practices of the men of light and leading I had known, now seemed to undergo further clarification and development. I had previously regarded God as only the efficient cause of the world, the Creator, Designer and Ruler of the world, with His infinite knowledge and power. But now I came to the conclusion that God is not merely the efficient cause, but both the efficient and the material cause of the world,–the Substance of the world as well as the Giver of form to it. Effect was not now thought of as different from cause,–as something previously non-existent and coming into existence through the operation of cause,–but as cause itself modified or transformed into another form. Effect accordingly was conceived as both different

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and non-different from cause. Jiva was not now regarded as an effect, as a thing created by God, as having an absolute beginning of its existence. For in that case, being produced it must have been non-eternal and it could not be entitled to eternal life after death. Arguing thus I accepted the conclusion that *Jiva* must be uncreated, that the infinite number of individual souls must have been existent along with God from Eternity. They must be conceived as mutually distinct finite spirits eternally living and moving and having their being in God and participating (unlike the inanimate and unconscious created substances) in the spiritual nature of God, Who is the Universal Self (Paramátmá) of all these individual selves and as such is their Supreme Lord, the sole Ruler of their actions and destinies and their Deliverer from all sufferings and the bondage of the world.

I found out at this time that God was conceived principally in four distinct ways by the illustrious saints and thought-leaders of the past and these conceptions formed the basis of different religious systems.

1. God is the supreme omnipotent omniscient Personality and is the sole Creator and Ruler of this world;—*Jiva* (individual spirits) and the world are His products; He does not require any other material cause for producing all these diversities.

2. God produces the world through *Prakriti*, the Cosmic Energy or the ultimate unmanifest (having no properties like colour, taste, odour, touch and sound) cause of the world. Prakrit is the eternally self-existent material cause of the world and God is the efficient

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cause. Though having an independent existence, Prakriti is in its operations subordinate to God and He produces the effect-world out of Prakriti (as an oil-man becomes the producer of oil unmanifestly pre-existent in material cause-seed, so in this view God though efficient cause is not creator of the effect-world from eternal atoms having properties like colour, taste, odour and touch-as some schools of atomists hold). Now Prakriti is said to be constituted of three *Gunas* called *Sattwa*, *Rajas*, *Tamas* which are interpreted as the principles of the intelligibility, activity and inertia and sometimes interpreted in terms of feeling as the principles of joy, sorrow and insensibility. The individual selves are not created by God out of Prakriti. They are eternally self-existent, but they are eternally associated with Prakriti within the domain of God till they attain liberation and transcend this word-system. Though I could not form a clear idea of the nature of Prakriti as constituted of Sattwa, Rajas and Tamas, still I found such a view, as described above, widely prevalent in the ancient religious and philosophical books.

3. In the third view Prakriti, the material cause of the world, is conceived as the Power of God, having no existence apart from and independent of the existence of God, but having a real existence in Him and for Him. It is God Who manifests Himself through the modifications of His Prakriti–His eternal inherent Power. As the Power of God, Prakriti is different as well as non-different from God, the Supreme Reality, and God is accordingly transcendent of as well as immanent in His Prakriti. In the modifications of Prakriti into the

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diversified world-system, God may be said to be modifying Himself and at the same time remaining changeless in His transcendent character. Since Prakriti is conceived as the real Power of God and the cosmic system is regarded as the real self-diversification of this Power, this world of diverse orders of existences is thought of as originating from and sustained and governed by the Divine Power and as having a real existence in, by and for God. The finite spirits also are conceived as special forms of eternal self-manifestation of God, and these spirits, though having their being in the midst of and in connexion with non-spiritual self-manifestations of the Divine Power, are essentially distinct from them, in as much as they participate in the transcendent spiritual nature of God.

4. According to the fourth view, God is essentially the one non-dual powerless, attributeless self-existent self-luminous Reality, having no created or uncreated reality within or outside Himself, the world-system as well as its material cause, Prakriti or the Power of God, having only an illusory appearance. The world is like a dream. Just as the objects and events experienced in a dream have no real existence–the dreamer alone being in that case the real entity, so all the diversities that we experience in this world are unreal appearances, the experiencer alone is real. All the objects of experience exist in, by and for the experiencer and have no existence apart from the existence of the experiencer. The experiencer is really one without a second, and that one is Impersonal God or Pure transcendent Consciousness called Brahman by the exponents of this view. The

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plurality of the experiencers or *Jivas* is also illusory. When perfect experience is attained, the consciousness of plurality disappears, and one changeless pure consciousness alone remains. Thus Jiva is essentially identical with Brahman. Illusory appearance owes its origin and sustenance to Ignorance. Therefore the plurality of Jivas as well as the diversities of the world must be regarded as originating from Ignorance. When true knowledge of Reality, i. e. Brahman, is attained, Ignorance vanishes and along with it all the plurality vanishes, the cosmic system vanishes. Máyá or Prakriti or the Divine Power is accordingly a name for this Ignorance, which is, truly speaking, the material cause of this phenomenal universe. This Ignorance is eternally supported by Brahman. It hides the true non-dual character of Brahman and makes Him appear as the illusory plurality of names and forms. God cannot therefore be called the Creator or Governor of any real world : He cannot be called either the Efficient Cause or the Material Cause in the true sense. He exists eternally in His transcendent self-luminous nature.

From a careful comparative study of the views of two of the most illustrious and most revered religious teachers of India, viz. A'chárya Shankara and Maháprabhu Shri Chaitanya, I found that both Shankara and Chaitanya were exponents of the theory of non-dualism (*Adwaita-Brahma-Va'da*), but they differed widely in their interpretation of it. Both maintain that the ultimate Reality, Brahman, is the efficient as well as the material cause of the world. But while Chaitanya holds that the world is in its unmanifested state eternally innate in

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the spiritual nature of the Cause, i. e. Brahman, that it is a real self-modification of the inscrutable Divine Power, and that Brahman as the perfect self-conscious absolute Personality manifests Himself quite freely and sportively as the world of finite spirits and objective realities, Shankara asserts that the world of diversities, being not logically consistent with the difference-less and changeless spiritual nature of Brahman (the Absolute Reality) must be conceived as illusorily appearing upon Him, that there is no real cause-effect relation between Brahman and the world, that the Power which makes this world appear on Brahman is also not a real power, but an inexplicable entity eternally and unaccountably associated with the essentially spiritual character of Brahman. Thus Chaitanya's world is a real world of God, while Shankara's world is a false world of Maya; Chaitanya's God is by Himself a morally spiritually intellectually and aesthetically perfect Supreme Personality with absolute Power and absolute freedom of action, while Shankara's God is by Himself a powerless attributeless actionless Impersonal Spirit, appearing as the Supreme Person through inexplicable association with the inexplicable Maya and its products. To Chaitanya Jivas or finite spirits are essentially many and have eternally real existence as spiritual *parts* or partial spiritual self-manifestations of Brahman, naturally depending upon Him for existence, progress and spiritual light; while to Shankara *Jivas* are essentially *one*, being identical with Brahman, who falsely appears as the plurality of *Jivas* through the veiling and diversifying operation of *Maya*. Shankara holds that each *Jiva* can

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get rid of its apparent individuality and separateness and realise itself as Brahman through immediate and perfect self-knowledge; while Chaitanya proclaims that each *Jiva* can attain pure and perfect individuality as a spiritual part of Brahman and can consciously participate in the perfect self-consciousness and self-enjoyment and beauty of Brahman, through absolute devotion and love and self-surrender to Brahman.

Both Chaitanya and Shankara are earnest in maintaining the non-duality of Brahman. Chaitanya asserts that the non-duality of Brahman is in no way affected by the reality of the finite spirits and the material objects, since they are His own sportive self-manifestations, existing in Him, by Him and for Him, having no existence apart from and independent of His existence, and being on that account essentially non-different from Him. He does not deny the *real* existence of the plurality, but denies their *independent* and *separate* existence. He holds that they, being His own self-manifestations, are real elements in His eternally and infinitely glorious life, and that He enjoys them within Himself and also transcends them in His transcendent self-consciousness. But Shankara thinks that the recognition of the real existence of the finite spirits and the material objects within the nature of the Absolute would imply complexity and differentiation and compositeness in His essential nature, which would be incompatible with the absolute non-duality of His character. Hence he asserts that what are called His self-manifestations can and should never be conceived as real in the sense in which the Absolute is real; these so-called self-manifestations

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are only illusory appearances of the Absolute, they appear as real only on a lower plane of existence, and in the light of true metaphysical knowledge they have no existence at all. Thus in two distinct ways Shankara and Chaitanya explain the nature of the world and maintain the non-duality of Brahman.

Now I describe the puzzle which arose in my mind at that time. According to Shankara, the attributeless Spirit alone is ultimately real, whereas the Spirit with attributes, (i. e. Personal God) has only apparent Reality and is on that account false from the absolute stand-point. According to Chaitanya, the Spirit with infinitely glorious attributes is the Absolute and Ultimate Truth, and the Spirit without any attribute whatsoever is an empty abstraction and has no concrete real independent existence. So what is ultimately true for Chaitanya is a false or conditional appearance for Shakara, and what is ultimately true for Shankara is an empty abstraction or an abstract aspect of the Reality for Chaitanya. Both Shankara and Chaitanya were great religious teachers. Both are believed to have realised the Ultimate Truth.. Both claimed to be interpreters of the Vedanta. Both exerted great influence upon the spiritual life and the metaphysical thought of India. But this difference with regard to the essential nature of the Absolute Reality was found to be fundamental. I found no way to reconcile their views. Having profound respect for both, I was puzzled and perplexed.

SRI RA'M KRISHNA DEV, however, appeared to

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have accepted both the apparently contradictory views. Without entering into any logical argumentation, he stated in a straightforward way that Brahman, the Absolute Reality, is both *Saguna* (with attributes) and *Nirguna* (without attributes). He did not repudiate one view for the sake of another. He seemed to think and preach that each view was true from a particular stand-point and that nobody, however great, had a legitimate right to say that "Brahman is this and not that." I found in the Gita also that Brahman was described as *Saguna* as well as *Nirguna*,-as possesing all powers and attributes and Himself doing everything that happens in the world and also as above all powers and attributes, untouched by any thing that occurs in the world. SHREE KRISHNA, Who proclaims Himself to be the Absolute Reality in the Gita, expounds there His own nature from various points of view and does not condemn any point of view as altogether false. But my mind was often haunted by the thought as to what is the true nature of the Absolute. But, so far as I remember now, this did not give me much trouble in my practical *Sadhana* at that time, and I did not then attach much importance to the conflict of views about the Ultimate Reality. I was much more interested in self-discipline. Moreover, I placed myself wholly under the guidance of Guru-Dev and had implicit faith in his words. Without paying much heed to the questions that would naturally arise in course of the study of the sacred books representing different schools of thought, I would devote myself to the practice of physical and mental self-discipline as instructed by my revered Guru-Dev.

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At this stage my *Sadhana* assumed a particular form. At the time of practising deep meditation, I would generally make earnest efforts to remove all thoughts, feelings and desires from my mind, sit perfectly calm and quiet in the same posture as long as convenient, and would concentrate my attention on that tranquil and silent state of the consciousness. At this time I would not cultivate any particular thought about God or any emotion of love for Him. At other times I would mindfully repeat the name of God, as taught by my Gurujee, without rousing any wave of feeling within the heart, but with calmness and tranquillity of the mind. Thirdly, I tried to form the habit of looking upon all objects, conscious or unconscious, as the visible manifestations of God, and thereby I would attempt to make my mind free from the feelings of hatred, antipathy, fear, etc. towards those objects and fill it with the feeling of love for and a sense of sacredness of them. I would try to think that all these men and things, being the manifestations of the holiest and most beloved God, must be loved and looked upon as essentially pure and holy, and never hated and looked down upon as ugly or impure. Previously the ideas of the omnipotence and omniscience and of the Supreme Greatness and Grandeur of God had been deeply impressed upon my mind. I had been accustomed to think of God as the Creator, Ruler and Destroyer of the world and to think of men and animals and things as His creation. But now the idea of the all-pervading nature of God became more predominant. I tried to see God in all and to love them as the manifestations and embodiments of the Ultimate Object of my worship. As on the one

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hand I practised non-attachment to all worldly objects, whether pleasurable or painful, so on the other I cultivated universal love as the outer expression of my love for the Divine.

My conception about the *Law of Karma* also underwent a little change. I found three theories about *Karma*. Some schools of thought discarded the Law of *Karma* on the ground that it was inconsistent with the absolute freedom of God to determine the courses of all worldly phenomena according to His will. Others held that the Law of *Karma*, far from being incompatible with the absolute power and freedom of God, rather demonstrated the righteousness and justice of God in His dealings with His conscious creatures. Some again maintained that God is just as well as merciful, His justice being manifested in His enforcing the Law of Karma, and His mercy being expressed in His provision for the progress of His creatures towards perfection and bliss in and through their rewards for virtue and punishments for vice and also in His special favour upon His devotees even in defiance of the Law of Karma. Previously I had cherished the second view and thought that our destinies were entirely determined by God in accordance with the merits and demerits acquired by us through our own actions. But now I found in my mind a leaning towards the third view. I now thought that *Karma* was not the sole determinant of our destiny and God was not bound to deal with us wholly and solely in accordance with our *Karma*; that he had His prerogative to bestow mercy on us, since the Grace of the Almighty could not be ignored. Thus the development

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of my faith in the mercy of God and its power of delivering a *Bhakta* from bondage and sorrow inspite of his past sins narrowed down my belief in the all-governing Law of *Karma*. I now believed that Karma might be superseded through *Divine Grace*.

I shall here proceed to the narration of the changes in my mental state which took place at that time, so far as I can recollect now. It seemed to me then that I was to some extent deprived of the calmness of mind which I had enjoyed before. I tried to find out the reason. I concluded that it was due to the lack of long-contiuued incessant practice on my part : I allowed the mind to run after too many things and entertain various thoughts which though connected with spiritual matters, dulled the edge of deep concentration. I used to study many books and naturally my mind dwelt on the subjects discussed therein. Though I valued the ideas and ideals culled from the precious pages very highly since these had such an intimate bearing on the *summum bonum* of my life and by opening my eyes to diverse religious and philosophical verities, ever widened the horizon of my knowledge, still I felt that the diversion of attention to a variety of subjects stood in the way of the practice of concentration and suppression of desires. I also experienced that these diverse subjects not only provoked mental unrest when I gave actual thought to them, but they left impressions upon my mind which became causes of distraction afterwards, and specially at the time of the practice of concentration. The talks with the Sadhus which I enjoyed much, were also sources of distraction. The memories of these

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talks would haunt me even when they were least wanted. Even the impressions of the topics relating to Babajee would present obstructions to the attainment of mental concentration. These were not of course so strong as the impressions left by my likes and dislikes about worldly objects. During the practice of meditation my mind would sometimes play with fanciful ideas arising from the re-arrangements (currents and cross-currents) of the impressions received in the past. Now I fully realised that all these things which I valued so much were not really helpful in the path of my spiritual advancement. I took fresh resolve to get rid of this unwelcome state of things. I began the practice of contemplation and meditation and the cultivation of the desireless and emotionless state of mind in right earnest. I bade good-bye to unnecessary talks and studies and actions as far as practicable. In this way I went on.

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NOTE I

Note on Bengal Vaishnavism

From the study of the literature of Bengal Vaishnavism founded by Sri Chaitanya I was acquainted with a new conception of God and His relation to the finite spirits and the world. In the literature of this system the Supreme Spirit, Who is the Absolute Reality, is spoken of as Sri Krishna, and the historical Sri Krishna of the *Dwa'para Yoga* is regarded as the perfect human self-revelation of the eternal spiritual Sri Krishna, the highest metaphysical Reality. Eternal Sri Krishna is conceived as inherently endowed with infinite Power (*S'akti*), which is essentially non-different from Him, though different in manifestations. This power of the Absolute manifests itself in three forms, called *Bahiranga'* (outward), *Tatastha'* (intermediate) and *Antaranga'* (inward). The *Bahiranga'* Sakti is also called the *Ma'ya'–S'akti*, and it is conceived as the Creative Power of the Supreme Spirit. It is this creative Power which is the source of all the diversities of the world,—all orders of non-spiritual existences including the living bodies and the knowing, feeling, desiring, thinking, remembering and imagining minds of the human beings. This *Maya Sakti* is His self-veiling and self-diversifying Power, which puts a veil, as it were, upon His perfectly self-existent, perfectly self-conscious, perfectly self-enjoying transcendent character, and manifests Him in diverse forms and orders of finite changing non-self-conscious non-self-enjoying relative existences subject to

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various kinds of limitations. This *Sakti* is the Mother of the phenomenal world. The world of diversities being a manifestation of His *Sakti* and the Sakti being essentially non-different from the *S'aktima'n* (the Owner of the Sakti), the world also is regarded as essentially non-different from Him. But being a product of His real creative Power, the world is thought of as real, and in the form in which it exists it is regarded as different from Him. The world is thus conceived as real as well as non-different from God. The world is not of course conceived to be absolutely real,–as real as God Himself; it has a dependent reality, a derivative reality, a phenomenal reality, its existence being derived from, dependent upon and sustained by the self–existence of God.

The *Antaranga' S'akti* is conceived as the inward transcendent spiritual Power of Sri Krishna, the Absolute Reality. It is also called *Chit–sakti* or *Swarupa–Sakti*,– the supreme Power which reveals the true eternal infinite transcendent spiritual character of the Reality, Sri Krishna. It is by virtue of this Power that Sri Krishna eternally realises and enjoys Himself as above the world of His *ma'yika* self-manifestations, as above all spatial temporal and existential limitations pertaining to His mundane self-expressions. It is by virtue of this Power that He eternally realises and enjoys His perfectly self-existent, perfectly self-conscious and perfectly blissful nature. This *Sakti* is conceived as having three modes or aspects,–viz. *Sandhini*, *Sambit* and *Hla'dini*. By virtue of the *Sandhini Sakti* He realises His absolute self-existent character, by virtue of the *Sambit*

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Sakti He realises His absolute self-conscious character, and by virtue of the *Hladini Sakti* He realises and enjoys His perfectly blissful character. Though the transcendent attributes of Sri Krishna as revealed through His *Antaranga Sakti* are hidden in the world by the operation of His *Bahiranga Maya Sakti*, nevertheless these attributes are partially and distortedly manifested even in this *mayika* world as finite and relative existences, finite and relative consciousnesses and finite and relative enjoyments of the worldly beings. Finitude and relativity of existences involve births and deaths and all temporal changes; finitude and relativity of consciousnesses involve knowledge and ignorance and error and doubt; finitude and relativity of enjoyment involve joys and sorrows of various kinds. All these, however, have as their ultimate ground and supreme ideal the absolute self-existence, self-consciousness and self-enjoyment of God Himself. Since the *Antaranga Sakti* gives expression to the true nature of the Absolute Reality and the *Bahiraga Sakti* veils this true nature and manifests it in distorted forms, the former is called *Sawrupa Sakti* (essential Power) and the latter *Chha'ya' Sakti* (shadow or non-essential Power) of the Reality. Maya Sakti is accordingly described as the shadow of *Chit Sakti* and the world of Maya (i.e. the world of our normal experience) as the shadow of the *Chinmaya* (spiritual) world. Moreover, of these three aspects of *chit-sakti*, *Hladini Sakti* is described as the most essential and supreme Power of Sri Krishna, in as much as it involves within itself the other two aspects,—the very idea of His perfect

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self-enjoying blissful nature involves within itself the ideas of perfect self-existence and perfect self-consciousness. Accordingly, the Reality as revealed through *Hladini Sakti* is conceived as the Supreme Reality. This *Hladini Sakti* is conceived in a personified form as *Sr' Ra'dha'*, and hence Sri Krishna as eternally revealing, realising and enjoying Himself through Sri Radha is regarded as the Supreme Reality and the ultimate object of worship to the spiritual aspirants. This is why the Vaishnavas worship God in the form of Sri Krishna as embracing and embraced by Sri Radha, instead of worshipping Him as Sri Krishna alone,–Sri Krishna in abstraction from His supreme Power. Sri Krishna conceived apart from His Power would be *Nirguna Brahman*, Who in the view of this Vaishnava school is nothing but an abstract Principle and not the infinite eternal absolute concrete Personality with perfect self-consciousness and self-enjoyment that Brahman or the ultimate Reality truly is. Just as a substance thought of as divorced from its powers and attributes is a mere abstraction, and not a real substance, so Brahman conceived as divorced from His *Sakti* – from His infinite and eternal, supremely glorious and beautiful, Powers and self-expressions and self-enjoyments – is a mere abstraction, an abstract aspect of the Supreme Reality. Hence these Vaishnavas look down upon the exponents of Non-dualist Vedanta as dry abstractionists. They regard themselves as having discovered the true perfect nature of Brahman, the Absolute Reality.

Intermediate between the *Antaranga Sakti* and the *Bahiranga Sakti*, another Sakti is conceived and this is

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called *Tatastha Sakti* or *Jiva Sakti*. By virtue of this *Sakti* the Supreme Reality, Sri Krishna, eternally manifests Himself as countless finite spirits (*Jivas*), which participate in His essential spiritual nature, but in whose nature the spiritual characteristics of the Reality are imperfectly and conditionally manifested. The *Jivas* are like atomic self-conscious parts of the Supreme Spiritual Reality. Being finite and imperfect spiritual self-expressions of the Infinite Eternal Absolute Spirit, the *Jivas* are subject to Ignorance and bondage and sorrow and have at the same time the possibility of emancipation from them and perfect self-realisation and self-enjoyment through the cultivation of true knowledge of, love for and devotion to the Absolute Spirit, Sri Krishna. In their worldly life they falsely identify themselves with the bodies and minds which are the products of God's *Maya Sakti* and feel themselves as weak and short-lived and miserable creatures undergoing various sorts of changes and vicissitudes along with the changes and vicissitudes of the bodies and minds. But when through the grace of the Divine *Chit-Sakti* they learn to think of the Divine Spirit as the true Self of themselves and all, become attracted towards Him and cultivate intense love and reverence and admiration and devotion towards Him, they realise their pure spiritual character and consciously live and move and have their blissful being in Him. According to this system the individuality of the finite spirit (*Jiva*) is not wholly lost in the Divine Existence, each *Jiva* that is liberated from ignorance and worldly bondage retains its pure spiritual individuality in the infinite and eternal and absolutely self-conscious and self-enjoying

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spiritual existence of God; it feels and enjoys the infinity, eternity, beauty, purity and bliss of the Divine nature in its own consciousness. Thus, in the view of this school, just as there is a psycho-physical world of unenlightened plurality born of God's *Maya-Sakti*, in which God's true character is veiled and in which innumerable finite spirits are ignorantly living and acting and enjoying and suffering and dying, so there is a spiritual world of enlightened and liberated plurality manifested by His *Chit-Sakti*, in which the blissful unity of God is not hidden behind the plurality, but is beautifully revealed in and through them, and in which the liberated *Jivas* eternally live and move with perfect knowledge, perfect freedom and perfect bliss and consciously participate in the Divine self-play and self-enjoyment. The Vaishnava poets give beautiful poetic descriptions of this spiritual world with the help of various imageries and in the forms of various human relations. They refer to the spiritual world by such names as *Vaikuntha*, *Brinda'ban*, *Goloka*, etc. To them *Mukti* means passing from this world of bondage to the world of freedom, and not identity with Brahman as the non-dualists hold.

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NOTE II

Note On Bhakti-Sa'dhana'

As the result of my study of Bhakti literature and observation of the religious practices of different sorts of people, I came to know of diverse forms of *Bhakti-sa'dhana'* prevalent in the country. **First,** the most popular form of Bhakti-sadhana consists in the ritualistic worship of numerous deities conceived as having diverse names and forms and various kinds of superhuman powers and attributes. Such worship is generally based on unreasoning belief in Puránic legends. Men and women offer worship to different gods and goddesses with different worldly (and sometimes other-worldly) purposes in view. They practise purity of body and sincerity of heart, use prescribed articles and adopt prescribed methods for pleasing the particular deities and obtaining wished-for boons from them. The deities are represented by appropriate images or idols, either occasionally prepared or permanently established. Very little spiritual value is attached to such worship by men, who claim to have higher religious culture. **Secondly,** a superior type of Bhakti-sa'dhana is current among the spiritual aspirants. They are divided into various sects. Each sect selects a particular Deity as the Supreme God, conceives Him as the ultimate Ground and Cause and Regulator of the world-order, endows Him with all possible glorious powers and attributes, regards Him as the highest Object of admiration, reverence, love and devotion, and worships Him

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with all their heart and soul. All other gods and goddesses are not disbelieved altogether, but are considered to be subordinate to the Supreme God, to Whom it is devoted. Different sects are found to be devoted to different selected Deities, but to each sect its own chosen Deity is supreme. The Supreme Deities of different sects of spiritual aspirants, though conceived and described by them as the infinite eternal, omnipotent and omniscient Creator, Ruler and Destroyer of all finite and transitory existences, of all names and forms and powers and attributes, are supposed to be endowed with special names and forms and special powers and attributes. The devotees of particular sects form the habit of repeatedly uttering or muttering particular Divine Names, contemplating and meditating on particular Divine Forms, reflecting on the particular powers and attributes associated with these specially glorious Names and Forms, and surrendering themselves to the mercy of the Supreme Lord as endowed with such Names and Forms and Powers and Attributes. They think that there is extraordinary and inexplicable spiritual efficacy in having recourse to the Names and Forms dear to their respective sects. The Supreme Deity (with particular name and form) of one sect is a subordinate deity to another sect. The followers of different sects do not consciously think that it is the same Supreme Deity,—the same Ground and Cause of the world-order,—the same infinite-eternal Reality above all particular names and forms,—Whom the diverse sects worship in diverse particular names and forms. They cannot think in this way consistently with their

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faith and devotion, since such an idea would rob the chosen and endeared Divine Names and Forms of their special spiritual significance,—would imply the denial of the idea that these Names and Forms are eternally associated with the Supreme Divine Personality. The different sects of devotees are found to quarrel with one another on the score of these divergences of Names and Forms and of special powers and attributes of the Supreme Creator and Lord of the universe, and also on the score of the differences in the processes of Bhakti Sadhana.

Thirdly, there are some Bhakti schools, which do not believe in any special name or form of God, but conceive Him as a nameless and formless Personality, having omnipotence and omniscience as well as infinite mercy and love. They have of course to choose some names for referring to the absolute Personality, because without the help of names thought becomes impossible. They do not, however, attach any special spiritual significance to any particular name. They vehemently oppose the idea of associating any form with the conception of the Supreme Person, since the very conception of form involves the conception of spatial limitation and the Creator and Regulator of all forms must Himself be above all possible limitations. God is supposed to be seeing without eyes, hearing without ears, acting without hands, moving without feet, doing all things at all times without any sense-organs. He has no body, but has infinite wisdom and power. The devotees of these schools describe and sing and meditate on His glorious powers and attributes, cultivate love and devotion to

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Him and try to appreciate and enjoy the beauty and sublimity of His nature as manifested in His creation. They are averse to ritualistic worship. Prayer, contemplation, meditation, recitation of hymns and singing devotional songs, and cultivation of the spirit of admiration, reverence, devotion, love and self-surrender to the one almighty omniscient merciful formless Personal God constitute their *Bhakti-sadhana*.

Fourthly, there are some religious sects, which, while believing that God in His essential eternal nature is without any form or body and without any specific name, also believe that He in His mercy and love towards His creatures appears to them in various attractive and awe-striking forms (forms of gods and goddesses) and assumes names appropriate to these forms. According to them all the Gods and Goddesses with particular names and forms are self-manifestations of one Personal God, and are therefore inwardly identical in spirit,-identical in their true Self,-and different only in outer appearances, in their names and forms. They are also found to believe that though all these Deities, being appearances of the same Supreme Lord of the universe, are inwardly omnipotent and omniscient and all-perfect, still the Lord at His sweet will manifests His power and wisdom and goodness and love in different forms and different degrees in and through the particular Gods and Goddesses, and hence the ideas of particular kinds of manifestations of the Divine glories are associated with the conceptions of the particular Gods and Goddesses. According to the spiritually advanced devotees of these sects, it is the ignorant people who

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think of the Deities as really distinct and separate from one another and quarrel about their relative superiority and inferiority, but the wise see and adore the same God in them all.

Fifthly, there are among the believers in the unity and spiritual personality of God some sects of devotees, who believe that God not only manifests Himself in the forms of superhuman Deities for bestowing His blessings upon His mundane creatures, but also occasionally descends to His world in human and even subhuman forms for playing particular parts and accomplishing particular purposes. It is believed that God by the exercise of His own perfectly free will is born in particular places and lives and moves and acts among His own creatures in such extraordinary human or subhuman forms, performs particular deeds for the welfare of the world and sets up new ideals or reinvigorates old ideals for His human creatures to pursue. In such self-manifestations God becomes human or subhuman in bodily forms, but retains all the glories of Godhead within. Such Divine self-manifestations, or *avata'ras* as they are called, are also worthy objects of devoted worship. Worship of any of these *avataras* means worship of the Supreme Lord. Each of the recognised *avataras*, when worshipped, is conceived as God Himself, – as the infinite and eternal, omnipotent and omniscient, perfectly good and merciful, Creator and Ruler of the universe, – appearing in a particular form and addressed in a particular name. Images of such *avataras* are constructed as the images of Deities, and the modes of worship and self-discipline are similar to those in the cases of

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the culture of devotion to the Deities. There are several religious sects in our country, which are specially founded on the devotion to one or another particularly chosen *avatara*, such as Ráma or Krishna. *Bhakti* schools of this type, based on devotion to Man-Gods, are wide-spread in the country.

Sixthly, there are some classes of spiritual aspirants, who do not believe in Personal God as the ultimate Reality, who are in their philosophical position advocates of one attributeless (*nirguna*) non-dual impersonal Brahman as the sole metaphysical Reality, but who in their practical sadhana practise *bhakti* to Personal God and even to the supposed diverse forms of His self-manifestation (Gods and Goddesses as well as Avataras). They hold that the Absolute Reality is one-dual impersonal Existence-Consciousness, without in its essential transcendent nature any attribute, any power, any creative or regulative will and activity, without even any self-consciousness and self-enjoyment. But they maintain that this Impersonal unrelated Existence-Consciousness, being somehow conditioned by inexplicable Máyá, appears as Personal God related to the world of finite selves and various orders of objective existences as its supreme Lord. Though they accept the view of non-daulist Vedanta that the individual selves (appearing as many in their phenomenal mundane life) are essentially one and identical with impersonal Brahman and that the world of diversities is false from the absolute (*pa'rama'rthika*) stand-point, nevertheless they maintain that in their practical (*bya'baha'rika*) life they must recognise Personal God (Brahman as conditioned by

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Maya) as the Supreme Lord of themselves and the universe and must offer whole-hearted homage and sincere worship to Him. These classes of devotees believe that one spaceless timeless changeless difference-less absolute self-existent impersonal Consciousness, being inexplicably conditioned by one mysterious Power, called Máyá, appears eternally (1) as one omnipotent omniscient and perfect Personal God, (2) as the plurality of *Jivas* or finite individual selves or subjects, and (3) as an objective world of diverse orders of finite changing existences, the *Jivas* and all the finite existences being naturally subordinate to and controlled and ruled by God. They also believe that the *Jivas* have the potentiality of attaining true knowledge of Brahman, transcending the domain of Maya, shaking off their false sense of finite individuality and realising absolute identity with Brahman. But they maintain that so long as this perfect knowledge is not attained, and absolute identity with Brahman is not realised, so long as the *Ma'yika* individuality is not merged in the absolute Existence-Consciousness, it is the moral and spiritual duty of every individual self-conscious *Jiva* (i. e. every human being) to cultivate the sweet and noble sentiments of admiration, reverence, devotion, love and self-surrender towards Personal God (the Supreme *Ma'yika* Reality), to worship Him with all the heart and mind and to seek for and rely upon His mercy. Among these classes of *bhaktas* there are many who worship Personal God in various names and forms,-who cherish special love and attachment to Ráma or Krishna or Siva or Káli or some such Man-God or Deity as the most perfect self-manifestation of Personal God.

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They do not even shrink from offering ritualistic worship to the various Images of Deities and Man-Gods, in which they imagine the presence of the same God in diverse forms and names and adoration to which they regard as suitable for the culture of *bhakti* and purification of the body and mind.

Seventhly, one remarkable fact in connection with *Bhakti-sadhana* is that it is found to be prevalent even among those sects which do not believe in God or Brahman, whether Personal or Impersonal (e. g. the Buddhists, the Jainas, the Sánkhyists). The Buddhists, particularly of the Mahájána school, worship the Lord Buddha in place of God and the Jainas offer worship to their *Tirthankaras* (the self-realised saints of old), particularly Páreshanátha and Mahábira. They cultivate all the religious sentiments associated with the culture of *bhakti*, construct sacred images of the objects of their worship and not unoften observe ritualistic ceremonies before the Idols. Some classes of devotees, while advocating the Sánkhya system of Philosophy, which has no place for God or Brahman, are found to form the conception of an almighty and omniscient, perfect and unique *Purusha* (called *Is'wara*), Whom they imagine as the Lord of *Prakriti* and all Her products. They having personified Prakriti, worship *Iswara* and *Prakriti*, as the Father and the Mother of the universe.

Eighthly, another remarkable fact about the *Bhaktisadhana* of India is that God is worshipped often in the form of Divine Couple, such as Siva-Gouri, Luxmi-Náráyana, Sitá-Ráma, Rádhá-Krishna, etc.

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The female Deity, conceived as representing the supreme Power of the supreme Person (*Parama Purusha*) is worshipped as the eternal consort of the Lord. Just as a thing and its attributes, a person and his qualities, a reality and its manifestations, when conceived apart from relation to each other, become nothing but abstract concepts devoid of real existence, so God and His unique Power (through which all His glorious attributes or qualities and all His creative, regulative and benevolent activities are manifested) are believed to be converted into mere abstract concepts, if sought to be thought of separately in isolation from each other. Hence God and His supreme Power are taken together and they together are believed to be the one Divine Reality and the perfect Object of devotion and worship. Since the Power exists in, by and for God,—since the existence and all possible expressions of the Power are wholly dependent upon and inseparable from the existence of God,—the Power is thought of as essentially non-different from God and hence not affecting His non-duality. The Divine Couple is accordingly worshipped as one perfect Reality. The Power is figuratively imagined as the eternally wedded Wife of God on the basis of an imperfect analogy with the ideal relationship between husband and wife, in as much as the heart and the soul and all the interests of the wife are ideally supposed to be united with those of the husband. The Divine Power is conceived as the eternal Mother of all finite and phenomenal existences, since all these existences are born of and sustained by this Power, and God Himself is conceived as the eternal Father, since He reveals Himself through this Power.

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Ninthly, another very notable feature of *Bhakti-sadhana,* prevalent among most of the Bhakti schools, is the practical conception of God in terms of diverse kinds of sweet human relations and the ascription to the supreme Reality of various kinds of soft, noble and benevolent human emotions and sentiments. The *bhaktas* think of God as Father or Mother, Brother or Friend, Master or Guide, Husband or Lover, and even Son or Daughter. They contemplate the Lord of the whole universe in terms of the predominant sentiments and emotions of their own individual hearts and believe that the Lord responds to their sentiments and emotions (if these are sincere and earnest) in corresponding manners. They believe that God is not only the sole Creator and Ruler of the universe nor does He merely exist in His transcendent blissful self-consciousness, indifferent to and untouched by the joys and sorrows of His creatures, but that He feels for us, He has love, affection and mercy for us, He protects us in dangers and difficulties, He guides our destinies with love and tenderness so as to lead us progressively towards peace and bliss and spiritual perfection. They believe that whoever becomes a sincere and earnest devotee can hold direct personal intercourse with Him and can have Him in his presence just in the form in which he likes to see Him and enjoy His presence. Their God is not a feelingless transcendent God, but an affectionate humanised God. Just as a devotee cultivating filial piety to God can directly experience Him as Father or Mother (according to the choice of his heart), so a devotee cultivating parental affection to Him can have Him as

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a little child. If we cultivate the spirit of true servant-hood towards Him, He appears to us as the most loving master or Lord; if on the other hand we cultivate the spirit of friendship and equality with Him, we can have Him as the most loving friend and play-mate. Thus the bhakti-sádhaná does away with the fundamental difference between the Divine and the human character and the ordinarily conceived remoteness of God from man. God is conceived as the eternally perfect Man with all the sweet and noble human characteristics eternally realised in His nature in perfection. All the phenomena of the world are regarded as His *Lila'*, – His sports,–the playful expressions of His perfectly self-fulfilled Divine-human nature. The individual human beings are believed to be capable of consciously participating in His Lilá through the culture of *bhakti* from the stand-point of the particular emotions they sincerely and earnestly cultivate. In this country the devotees of the *S'a'kta* sect generally culture *Bhakti* with the conception of God as Mother, those of the *S'aiva* sect with the conception of God as Father and those of the *Vaisnava* sect with the conception of God as Friend or Lover or Child. The culture of Bhakti with the idea of God as the loving Master or Lord also is widely prevalent. In all cases the sweetest and purest human emotions and corresponding forms of worship are practised towards God, with the belief that He also possesses such emotions and responds to those of the devotees.

Tenthly, another feature of *Bhakti-sa'dhana'* also deserves special notice, – this is the important place of Guru (spiritual guide) in this *sadhana.* It sometimes

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involves the ideas of the humanisation of God as well as the divinisation of one particular person, from whom a spiritual aspirant obtains spiritual light. Every individual who feels the spiritual yearning within his heart is instructed to approach with deep reverence some saintly person who is believed to have already become spiritually enlightened and to have acquired the power to transmit spiritual light to other earnest seekers. He is required to place himself completely under the guidance of such a saintly person, accept whatever he says and carry out his commands with the implicit faith that he will lead him to the spiritual goal of his life. The particular saint in whom a particular devotee can put perfect faith and trust and complete reliance with regard to his spiritual success and who mercifully and affectionately takes the sacred charge of his spiritual life, becomes Guru (in the strict spiritual sense of the term) in relation to that devotee, and that devotee becomes his disciple. The life of a disciple is required to be a life voluntarily dedicated to the Guru. It is generally believed that without the active mercy of such a perfectly enlightened and self-fulfilled Guru no aspirant can by dint of his independent efforts ever attain true spiritual light and reach the ultimate spiritual goal of his life. It is through the Guru that Divine light is supposed to enter into the soul of the disciple. Now, while generally believing in the necessity of whole-hearted devotion to the Guru for spiritual enlightenment, the *bhakti* schools are divided in their views with regard to the position of Guru. Three views are found prominent. According to one view, the Guru is an indispensable helper and instructor and guide in

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the spiritual path, but he is nothing more than an enlightened human being; faith in, submission to and reverence for Guru are imperative duties of the disciple for his spiritual advancement; but Guru should not be identified with God, Who is the ultimate Object of worship and the goal of spiritual life, and the way to Whom the Guru teaches. According to the second view, the Guru is not merely the teacher and helper and guide, but he is also the medium between God and the disciple. God is supposed to reveal Himself to the spiritual aspirant in and through the Guru, and the God-seeker is required to realise God in and through the Guru. According to this view, though the Guru is not wholly identical with God, the disciple does for the purpose of his *bhakti-sadhana* conceptually identify him with God, tries to see God in him, cultivates devotion to him and offers worship to him just as he would to God, in order to realise God in and through him. It is believed that infinite eternal absolute God becomes realisable to the finite mind and heart of the devotee through the medium of the Guru. The Guru is accordingly conceived neither wholly as God nor purely as an enlightened man, but as a divinised man in relation to the disciple, who attains deliverance from the bondage of the world and realises Divinity through the mercy of God descending upon him through this God-man. According to the third view, the Guru is conceived neither as a human teacher of spirituality nor as a semi-human and semi-divine medium between God and the devotee, but as perfectly identical with God. The advocates of this view maintain that God Himself in His infinite mercy for the sincere and earnest God-seeker

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appears in the body of a saint and infuses spiritual light into his mind and heart. The Guru is God in an apparent human body, which also is spiritualised and divinised by the presence of God in it. Perfect love, reverence, devotion and self-surrender to Guru mean, according to this view, perfect love, reverence, devotion and self-surrender to God. The disciple is instructed to see the Guru as embodied God, to meditate on his body as the sacred embodiment of Divinity, to serve him in the spirit of service to God Himself, to place himself absolutely at his disposal and to carry out his commands as Divine commands. The disciple has to cultivate the belief that God in this living form is guiding him during his life-time in His own path, is progressively purifying and enlightening and spiritualising his body and mind, and will at the end of his spiritual career unify him with His perfectly spiritual transcendent Self. This is *Guru – Va'da* in its extreme form, and this view is widely prevalent in some sections of *bhakti – va'dins* of the present day.

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CHAPTER VII

In Jail

After having passed sometime in *Sa'dhana* along with study, I felt an eagerness to live in solitude and was thinking of just retiring to some solitary place for more intensive *Sa'dhana'* wholly undisturbed by external circumstances. It was the year 1910 and it was at this time that I was arrested by the Police under Sec. 124A (i. e. Conspiracy to wage war against the Emperor by collecting men, arms and money) and sent up for trial in the famous Dacca Conspiracy Case. There were 54 accused in this case. Pulin Babu and 44 others including myself were arrested, and nine others absconded. As it was a special political case, we were given special diet and placed in solitary cells under special Gurkha guards. There were more than three hundred witnesses on the side of the prosecution. This case was very important in this respect that it affected the whole of East Bengal, since the accused persons belonged to many places in various districts. This case had also another unique feature, in as much as it was the only big Conspiracy Case where no approver could be obtained for the Crown. This testified to the strength and added to the glory of the organised constitution of the Samity. In the Sessions Court we were defended by Barrister C. R, Das of immortal fame. The case lasted one year (upto Sessions), when many of us were convicted and awarded punishment by the Sessions Court. Pulin Babu and two others were sentenced to transportation for

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life, some got 10 years' rigourous imprisonment, some 4 years, some three years, I got 7 years In the High Court some of the accused including myself were acquitted. Two European Judges found the evidence against me insufficient for my conviction, while the third judge, Sir Ashutosh Mukerjee was further convinced of my innocence on the ground that I had a deeply religious turn of mind. The High Court reduced the terms of sentence of the other accused also. Pulin Babu and the two others, who had received the maximum punishment, got it reduced to 7 years' transportation.

Now let me give an idea of what effect my jail-life as an under-trial prisoner for a year and as a convicted prisoner for about eight months had on my spiritual progress. Far from taking the jail as a place of suffering, I looked upon it as a most convenient place for 'Sadhana;' and hailed it as a grace and blessing of *Guruji*. We had to remain in solita- ells without being allowed to talk to one another. The solitary cell appeared to me to be the lone y place for which I felt a yearning, while at home. I got sufficient time and suitable opportunity to devote myself to *Sadhana*. As religious literature was allowed in the jail, I gave sometime to study also. Even in the court-room I used to sit in a corner of the dock and practise *Sadhana* without any care for the proceedings. I made considerable progress in self-discipline by such constant efforts during the period of my incarceration. Sometime at dead of night when there was perfect stillness all around me I tried to dive deep into my mind and to make an intense search for finding out if any evil thoughts or

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ill feelings still lurked in its nooks and corners. I was satisfied that even when the mind was left to itself, even when no attempt at repressing its thoughts and feelings was consciously made, they would not generally move in the wrong direction. There was an intense longing for the realisation of God in my heart.

At this stage my mind was occasionally haunted by the thought that I had never got the experience of what was called *bhāva* (devotional raptures) in Vaisnava literature. I felt a yearning for it and made an effort in that direction.

As the result of such effort my love for God occasionally appeared in the form of a wave of emotion and sometimes expressed itself in the form of tears, cries, shudderings etc.* Afterwards my view-point changed

* On one occasion, I remember, when I was in such an emotional mood at night in the jail, and was half-consciously crying out the Name of the Lord, the Gurkha-guard asked me not to make any noise. As I did not pay any heed to his warning, the guard next morning complained against me to the Superintendent. The Superintendent came and questioned me "Do you know that you have broken the jail-law? Did not the guard warn you about it? I replied, "I know it is against your jail-law. The guard also did his duty, he is not to blame. But my explanation is this that I was practising devotion and could not check my emotion." The Superintendent was not satisfied with the explanation and ordered me to undergo the punishment of standing the whole day with raised hands stuck to a handcuff in the wall. After a few minutes the Jailor came to me and said, "As you have not tried to throw the blame upon the shoulders of the guard in-charge as some of your co-accused did on previous occasions and as you have plainly and truly expressed what happened, the Superintendent is pleased to withdraw his order and give you only a warning this time."

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and I said to myself, "Why should I allow myself to be carried away by such emotional waves? I must control them." Accordingly the special practices which gave rise to such sentimental outbursts were discontinued and whole-hearted attention was paid to calmness and concentration. Whenever the mind was undulated by any emotion, I would check it and prevent it from having any outward expression. In this way my *Sadhana* advanced.

The principal object of my *Sadhana* was development of Bhakti in my heart. I never prayed for any worldly gain or secular advantage. When the sentence of 7 years' rigorous punishment was read out to me, I received it calmly, repeating within myself again and again "Let Thy will be done, O merciful Lord." While I was undergoing punishment, I used to sleep only four hours at night. All the remaining hours of the night I passed in *Sadhana*. There was deviation from this routine, only during the period when I had to run the oil-producing machine (*Gha'ni*). More than nine hours of hard work in daytime would leave me too tired for *Sa'dhana'* at night. Sometimes I used to sigh and think "If I have to go on like this until my health breaks, my aim of life will be frustrated." However, after 20 months' detention in jail I was acquitted and released in 1912. Returning home I found that my beloved mother had in the meantime passed away. I was moved to hear that anxious and sorrowful thoughts about me were uppermost in her mind before she breathed her last. For a few minutes when all around were crying aloud for my mother, the sorrow having grown poignant at

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my presence, I felt a sharp pang of bereavement. Then I pulled myself together, consoling myself with the thought that I was at last free to pursue the path of my choice. My only link with worldly life had snapped and my last bond broken; free as air, I could now embrace *Sannya's* any time I chose. This evoked a gentle smile on my lips in spite of my sorrow. My father could not read my heart. He rebuked me for my callousness, saying, "your mother is no more and you are smiling," However, after staying at home for only 14 days I started for Gorakhpore.

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CHAPTER VIII

Adieu To Worldly Life

Bábáji's musical voice greeted me cheerfully with these significant words : छुटकर आया ! " You have come freed ! " I had all along secretly hugged the idea of *Sannya's*, but I had not the heart to speak to my master. I wanted to be a beggar but shrank at the idea of begging for my living. My mother's affection too stood in the way. But now I thought myself free to embrace SANNYAS. Perhaps my *Sadhana* in jail had given a fillip to my desire. I was now determined for it. I was fully convinced of the advantages of ascetic life for rapid spiritual progress. I now realised more clearly than ever that contact with worldly men and circumstances was a fruitful source of numerous worries and anxieties and prolific disturbances and interruptions and that constant meditation and the highest type of spiritual self-discipline were not practicable in the worldly life. One could not, I thought, live in society and ignore the social environments or obligations. I was further convinced that it was not possible to root out all internal passions and desires in the midst of worldly surroundings, where there were so many external objects and events to feed them every moment. The arguments against *Sannyas* were met by stronger arguments against worldly-life from the spiritual point of view.

I resolved upon renouncing all worldly pursuits and pleasures so as to devote my whole time and energy to the meditation of God. My ambition was to realise God,

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to penetrate into the secrets of Nature, to be perfectly free from all desires and passions, all sins and sorrows, all ignorance and bondage, and to enjoy a perfectly blissful life in God through eternity.

One day I expressed to Guruji my desire for initiation into *Sannyasa*. He cast his look upon me with his characteristic gravity and said योगी बनोगे ? Do you mean to turn a Yogi ? " " I don't like to belong to any particular sect," I replied in earnest, " give me *Sannyasa* and I shall retire to some mountain and practise *Sadhana* in solitude." He kept silent for sometime, and then in his usual mild and sweet tone remarked तोमारेको सन्यासका संस्कार है—You have got the potentiality for Sannyasa," " when time will come " he added, " I shall call you ". Though I was acquitted of all charges by the Highest Court of Judicature and though I had bidden adieu to all forms of politics, I could not avoid the ever-suspicious look of the Police. The eyes of the police followed me to Gorakhpur. Officers of the local 'THA'NA' haunted the *A'srama* and enquired about me. Apprehending police-trouble, Babajee asked me to stay away from Gorakhpur for sometime. My young fellow-disciple Jitendra Nath Guha (nicknamed A'kálu of Mymensingh who afterwards embraced Sannyása and was known by the name of Nivrittinath) happened to be present there on that occasion. The Navakalevar Ceremoney was to be celebrated at Puri in that year. It was a ceremony which took place every twelfth year in which Jagannáth was supposed to assume a new body. Babaji ordered both of us to go to Puri and witness the ceremony. Though I had no interest in these popular

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forms of religion, I humbly submitted to his command and started for Puri with Akalu. At Puri we put up in Jotia Baba's Asram (The Asram of Bejoy Krishna Goswami) for about a month. After that I went to Dacca and waited for the orders of Babajee to return to him and be blessed with Sannyasa.

A few months afterwards I was informed by a brother-disciple of mine (Rákhál Chandra Dás) that Babajee desired my presence there. I hurried to Gorakhpur with great delight (in 1913). I was fairly certain that I would be favoured with *Sannyá'sa* this time. On arrival I found that four police-guards were stationed on the temple-premises. Perhaps Babajee did not like that the Police should plague me even in my *Sannyá'sa*-life and create unnecessary disturbances in my *Sá'dhana*. The ceremony of initiation into *Sannyá'sa* was gone through in the simplest manner and with the strictest secrecy. The Police watcher got no scent of it. Babajee then asked me to go to Benares and put on Sannyasa-robes there. He ordered me to pass two years in the Himalayas, including one year at Rikhikesh.

On this memorable occasion he was pleased to give me a new lesson on Sádhaná viz. *Ajapá'*. It consists in watching carefully the in-coming and out-going of breath (inhalation and exhalation) and concentrating the attention upon the gentle monotonous sounds produced thereby, The sounds should be taken as *So* and *aham*. The significance of the *Sá'dhaná'* lies in the assumption that our life-power (*Prá'na*) is repeating with every breath "I (*aham*) am He (*sa*), that the self is identical with Brahman, and a *Sadhaka* ought to

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listen to this utterance and contemplate on it. He asked me to watch the breath-sound from the very root upwards and to practise *Puraka*, *Rechaka* and *Kumbhaka* (the different stages of *Prá'ná'yá'm* or control of vital energy through the mechanism of respiration).

From Gorakhpur I went to Benares making such devices as not to be detected by the police in the Junction of Bhátni. Having reached Benares, I put on Sádhu-dress after shaving my head and bathing in the Ganges. Thence I went to Hardwar on my way to Rikhikesh and made a short stay at Swami Bholánanda Girijee's A'shrama. Swamijee favoured me with some advice, encouraged me for *Sa'dhana'*, allotted a fixed place for my Sadhana in his Ashrama and ordered me to keep sitting there the whole day which I did. The old Swamijee's energy and enthusiasm evoked my admiration, though I did not find the calmness and serenity on his face and in his dealings, which I wanted to see in a great Sádhu. I left for Rikhikesh after a week.

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CHAPTER IX

One Year At Rikhikesh

Here at Rikhikesh began my actual Sadhu-life. I took my abode in the old *Jha'ri* (forest) quarters of Rishikesh. There were many grass-cottages built by *Sa'dhus* for their solitary *Sa'dhana'*.

It is a general convention among Sadhus of Rikhikesh, that the cottages made and left empty by Sadhus may be utilised by any new-comer Sadhu, on the understanding that whenever the cottage-owner would return the new-comer should vacate the cottage. I began to live in some cottage left by a Sadhu. Now two Sadhus advised me to raise a small cottage for myself and they promised help also. But these two Sadhus as well as myself were penniless. So we availed ourselves of the opportunity offered by the *Chettra*-authorities. It was arranged by them that those Sadhus who wanted to set up cottages could get from the Chettra such articles as rope and scythe for cutting grass. These two Sadhus led me to the grass-field and we began cutting grass. "Oh! how hard and toilsome the task appeared to me", as I was never accustomed to such work. Further, we had to carry the loads of grass and take them to the Jhari 2 miles distant from the grass-field. This bitter experience made me conscious of my unfitness for the job, and I gave it up. As I had no money for engaging labourers for the work, I abandoned the desire for putting up a cottage for myself. I took shelter in one cottage for sometime and later in another, without any fixed abode for myself.

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I used to get food once a day from two Chetras—one establised by a celebrated *Sannya'si* known by the name of Kálikamliwála by reason of the black blanket he used to wear and the other established by a society of householders of the Punjab and Sind. Food was not good, it was just enough to keep body and soul together. I was used to four meals a day at home; now, I had only one, and that too poor in nutrutive values. Sometimes, when I saw sweets in a shop I felt tempted to take some at times. Now I had just a few annas left with me as the balance of the money, which I got for my Railway fare to Hardwar. I remember several nights when driven by desire for sweets I walked to the confectioner's and back to my cottage, a good couple of mile's brisk walk. One night I went to the shop twice under the same impulse. When I returned after gratifying my appetite, it set me a-thinking. Was I going to be a slave of greed? I thought that this trouble was due to money in my pocket. I resolved to exhaust it. I went to the shop deliberately for the third time and spent the entire sum. This did not rid me of my desire which used to peep in, but my empty pocket solved the problem quick as thought and saved me a lot of trouble. In cooler moments it appeared strange even to myself that when I thought myself sufficiently advanced in spiritual life, when I imagined that my desires and passions were to a great extent under my control and when I became a full-fledged *Sannya'si* in order to devote myself exclusively to meditation on the Divine, I was now and then enslaved by a passionate desire to taste such filthy sweetmeats as I would have never cared to touch even with my hand, during the period

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I was at home ! In my home-life various dainties of the table were offered to me in abundance and I rejected them sternly. They were within easy reach and I never felt like enjoying them; on the contrary they nauseated me. But now these titbits were real prizes to me since they were so scarce and I was all too ready to walk miles to have them ! This experience revealed the cruel fact that the desires, though suppressed, were not dead. They were now roused by actual want. I now realised that at the time of want desires become stronger than when they could be easily satisfied. I became cautious against the deadly whispers of latent desires and exerted my power of will to root them out completely. But still I experienced now and then that I would hail the day as bright and auspicious when we were offered sweets as an additional dish from the *Chhetra*.

I have already noted that the food generally distributed among the *Sadhus* from the *Chetras* was not substantial enough to give proper nourishment to the body, specially of a young man of robust physique like myself. However, living on that scanty food I began to practise hard. It was summer (June); Rishikesh was very hot. I sat all day in a small cottage scorched by the sun's heat. I allowed myself no rest after food. I did not stir out of my hut except on dire necessity. I slept very little at night. Thus carried away by the surging tide of fresh *Vairágya* (aversion to all worldly things), I violated all the rules which a practitioner of *Yoga* should observe. As the result of such waywardness in practice of self-discipline, my optical nerves were affected in course of a few months. My eyes used always

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to water. There was general deterioration of my physical health. About my mental state, however, I made onward progress.

Let me here give an idea of the mode of my *sa'dhana'* at this time. I had previously been under the impression that my method of *Sadhana* was most comprehensive, not opposed to any other form of *Sadhana* and quite sufficient to lead me to the goal. But when Bábájee while giving Sannyasa ordered me of his own accord to practise *Ajapa* with *Soham* (I am He), it struck me that I was initiated into a new mode of *Sadhana*. Previously my *Sadhana* had been in the line of *Bhakti*. But now my *Guru* guided me into the line of *Jna'na-Sadh na*, with the basic conception of the identity of the individual self with the Supreme Self (*Parama'tman*), as taught by the Upanishads and Sankara's Vedanta philosophy. I had at that time no clear idea about the actual practice of *Jnana*. Still I knew that it was a path distinct from the path of *Bhakti*. Babajee also did not impart to me any elaborate lessons on *Jnana-Sadhana*. Then, I thought within myself that by initiating me into the practice of Ajapa, Babajee perhaps intended that I should devote more time and energy to meditation on the identity of myself with Brahman and this I should practise by concentrating my attention on the process of in-breathing and out-breathing. Then I went on with my practice accordingly, paying more attention to concentration, and without being disturbed with the thought as to whether I am really different or non-different from God. So my thought about *Soham* was at that time only subsidiary or nominal. I cared only for calming down the desires

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and passions, getting rid of the restlessness of the mind and enjoying the sweetness of meditation. Having implicit faith in the words of Babajee, I did not think it necessary or proper to adopt any other method of spiritual self-discipline. I assiduously practised just what he taught me.

I was not then fully conscious of the implication of this unquestioning faith in and whole-hearted devotion to Gurujee. It was this faith and devotion, which almost unconsciously brought about a radical change in my conception about God and the self. The simple fact of his initiating me with the *Mantra* of *Soham* (I am He) created in my inner heart a bias in favour of the non-dualism of the monistic Vedanta in preference to the long-cherished dualism of the Bhakti-schools. The few short sentences he uttered by way of giving me instruction about ultimate Truth were sufficient to change my outlook. In my earlier life my religious outlook was to a large measure shaped by my association with the devotees of the Bhakti school, and particularly with the disciples of the illustrious devotee, Vijoya Krishna Goswami. From such association I had imbibed a strong admiration for the life of Sri Chaitanya and also for the life of Guru Nanak. I had been enchanted by the life of Chaitanya Dev as depicted in *Sri Chaitanya Charita'mrita*. I had also studied the life-stories and instructions of many other saintly Bhaktas. It was but natural that my thoughts and feelings had been greatly influenced by the lives and teachings of these Bhaktas. Accordingly without such logical discrimination a dualistic bias had taken possession of my undeveloped mind. I

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had heard of the spiritual greatness of Babajee also from the disciples of Goswamijee and had been introduced to him by one of them. I had therefore the impression that Babajee's religious and philosophical views must be similar to, if not identical with, those of *Maha'prabhu* Sri Chaitanya, of whom Goswamijee was in the most developed stage of his *Sadhana* a devoted follower. Even after my first initiation I had been going on with that impression. I had been devoted to the Divine Name, I had been thinking of God as my supreme Lord and the Lord of the Universe, I had been cultivating reverential love for and self-surrender to Him, and so on.

But when at the time of *Sannyasa* he gave a *Mantra* implying the identity of God and the self and uttered some words of instruction to that effect, a new light seemed to enter into my soul, the whole significance of which I did not understand. Previously I had got the notion of the identity of God and the Guru. But the notion of the identity of God and the self, as taught by *Sankara's* philosophy, had not touched my mind and heart. During this time I did not accept Sankara's conclusions, not because I could discover any serious logical defect in it, but chiefly because I did not like it and because it was opposed to my cherished notion. Though theoretically I put reason above faith, practically I was guided more by faith than by reason. In the first stages of my initiation, Babaji's instruction also was in the direction of *Bhakti*. But the instruction he gave me at the time of *Sannyasa* led me to think that he was more inclined to the non-dualism of Sankara and the *Jnana-Sadhana* associated with it. This brought

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about some change in my attitude towards Sankara's philosophy. Here also my faith in Babaji was a more potent factor in determining my attitude than reason. Philosophically however I kept my mind open. Instead of dogmatically accepting this or that view as final, I maintained the attitude of a sincere truth-seeker and carried out Guru's instruction. Even when giving instruction on *Jnana* and *Ajapa*, Babaji did not ask me to give up *Bhakti-Sadhana*. He appeared to hold that contemplation on the identity of Soul and God was not inconsistent with contemplation on God as the Supreme Lord of the self and the world. So I continued with my previous programme with *Ajapa* as a great help to concentration. At that time I passed more time not in the meditation on the form of Gurudev, but in concentrating my mind on regulated and rythmical breath-sounds and the unity of the individual self and the Universal Self. When I felt fickleness I would repeat the name of God, but when the mind was somewhat concentrated I would leave it off and begin *Ajapa*. When I felt fickleness again, I would again resort to the Divine Name. It was my experience that during fickleness *Ajapa* practice did not bear any fruit; rather sometimes it provoked some feeling of distraction. At a comparatively concentrated state of the mind it was very fruitful. Contrariwise during fickleness of the mind, articulate repetition of the Divine Name was very efficacious, while at a somewhat concentrated state it retarded deeper concentration.

In the earlier stages of my solitary practice here many wild thoughts would bubble up in my mind. Such

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evil thoughts as I could never imagine to have been lurking within me (specially thoughts on sexual passion) used to make their appearance with all their vehemence, though I was always alert against them. On the one hand the latent desires welled up from within and created trouble, while on the other I intensified my efforts for self-control and tranquillity and continuously muttered with earnestness the Name of God. When I found the checking of the mad motions of the mind very difficult, the Name of the Lord was my chief refuge and I repeated it with a prayerful attitude. After several months my strenuous practice began to bear fruits; it acquired sufficient potency to resist and subdue, at least temporarily, the rising waves of the evil thoughts and feelings and desires. For sometime they would occasionally make their appearance, but could be immediately checked. Gradually their appearances became few and far between. My mind became calm and serene. I became accustomed to solitude and asceticism. I was no more troubled by evil thoughts, feelings and desires. Sadhana became in a large measure natural with me.

At this stage I got a new experience. The repetition of the Divine Name had so long been found greatly effective in tranquillising my mind, in suppressing my evil thoughts and feelings, in spiritualising my outlook. But when through such *Japa*, the mind attained sufficient calmness, *Japa* seemed to be taking leave of me. I would attempt to repeat the Divine Name as obtained from Guru, but within a short time it would automatically stop and the mind would become vacant. I then began the practice of *Ajapa* as instructed by Guru. I would direct my concentrated attention to my rhythmic

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breathing and intensively think that my inner being was repeating with every breath that "I am He" (*Hamsah, Soham*).

Now I narrate what changes I experienced in myself as the result of my Sadhana. Previously I had realised on rare occasions a state of consciousness in which my mind would enjoy deep calmness and tranquillity and become free from all sorts of cares and desires and restlessnesses. Incessant efforts enabled me now to dwell in that blessed state for a much longer period. Not only would my deep meditation be of longer duration; but even in the normal waking state the influence of the meditation was quite perceptible. I felt like a man under the influence of some intoxicating drug. While living and moving in this world of diversities, I felt inwardly as if dwelling in some other world, – in a world of blissful silence. My latent desires and passions could scarcely raise their heads and create any excitement on the surface of my consciousness. There seemed to be something like a transformation in my mental nature. I could now pass without any hard struggle to a plane of consciousness, in which the mind would become devoid of all objects, whether recollected or imagined, and enjoy a blissful state of void and rest. I was not however satisfied with my spiritual achievement. Though I was able to put down my desires and passions, which I had regarded as the bitterest enemies in the path of my spiritual progress, though I could get rid of restlessness, attain a state of deep concentration, and taste the sweetness of a perfectly calm and tranquil state of the mind, I had not the feeling of having reached my

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goal. I felt that I was not face to face with the Absolute Truth, that my consciousness was not fully identified with the Absolute Divine Consciousness, that my finite and changing individuality was not wholly merged in the infinite and eternal One.

By this time my attitude towards Divinity and the Ideal of my life underwent some change in consequence of my enjoyment of the sweetness of deep concentration. I would no longer direct my effort towards the cultivation of emotional love for the Lord, towards the development of the sentiments of admiration and reverence and attraction for Him, towards the enjoyment of the transcendent beauty and sweetness and goodness and mercy of His nature, as I sometimes used to do before. This lost its importance with me. Concentration of the mind, perfect freedom from all kinds of fickleness and outward tendency of the mind, enjoyment of absolute peace and tranquillity within, was now all-important with me, and my effort was now directed towards the achievement of this ideal.

Now I describe how at Rikhikesh I came in contact with two illustrious Mahátmás—One Swami Turiyánandji of the Ramkrishna Mission and the other Sádhu Mangalnáthji, a renowned Vedantist of Upper India, and how from the latter I got initiated into the Vedantic line of thinking.

About this time Swami Turiánandji came to Rikhikesh and resided there for sometime. I used now and then to go to him. He had much affection for me. I also had great admiration and reverence for him. On one occasion, I remember, he accompanied me to a

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temple where he bowed before the idol, but I did not. He marked this and retorted "I see you have become attached to *Jnana*."! Afterwards on many occasions when he saw me, he used to sing a Bengali song to me and was sometimes moved with deep emotions, when singing. The song started with a sentence, which meant,—"O Mother, I do not require *Jnana* any more, make me mad with love for Thee." However, from Turianandajee's company I learnt much, and got encouragement and inspiration for Sadhana.

Once I asked Turiyanandji this question,—"What should I do when my mind attains through practice a state of calmness unmarred by the experience of any object. Should I revert to my object of contemplation or should I try to enhance the period of enjoyment of that tranquil state? He advised me to adopt the former course. I remember to have put the very same question to Sadhu Mangalnathji afterwards, and to have received just the opposite answer. I on my part did sometimes the one and sometimes the other.

Now I describe how sometime after I came to be acquainted with Mangalnathjee and how this acquaintance had a great influence upon my mode of thought and method of *Sadhana*. It may be said to have been a turning-point in my life.

At dusk I used to go to the Ganges to fetch water. On the bank of the Ganges, I had occasional talks with a Sadhu. I had heard of him previously. He was generally spoken of as a Sadhu of a high order,—a practical vedantist, a sincere *tyagi* (renouncer of the world), really indifferent to the physical needs and worldly

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concerns and unattached to money and name and fame. He did not amass money or make disciples or build gorgeous Maths and A'shrams or advertise himself as a *Maha'purusha*. From the talks I had with him, he was perhaps favourably impressed with me and he treated me with affection and interest. But he found that I was labouring under the influence of the Bhakti-cult and had little knowledge of the philosophy and practice of *Vedanta*. As a Vedantist he naturally regarded *Bhakti* as inferior to *Jnana*, since *Bhakti* was based on the conception of difference between the Absolute Spirit and the individual soul, while *Jnana* was based on the conception of their essential identity. *Bhakti-Sadhana* was considered by him as worthy of the lower order of *Sadhakas*. Probably he saw in me fitness for the higher type of Vedantic *Jnana – Sadhana*, though I was attached to the Bhakti-Cult. One day he told me in a loving voice "Swamijee, I have just one prayer to you. First promise that you will grant my prayer." I thought within myself that this Swami was not likely to ask me for anything which I should not be able to give him. Accordingly I promised to comply with his request. He with folded hands (a gesture of humility and supplication) prayed to me विचार किजीयेगा "Please engage yourself to *Vicha'ra* (search of Truth)." By *Vichara* he of course meant the Vedantic method of approach to the Absolute Truth. He said "I have got a copy of *Vicha'r – Sa'gar* with me; please read this book at first." He further asked me to see Sadhu Mangalnáth and Sadhu Viramdás. I finished Vichar-Ságar in three days. I hurriedly went through it, because I considered study

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as an obstacle to my *Sadhana*. Having gone through the book I got the impression that the book was a good one and worthy of being studied.

This Sadhu informed me that Mangalnáthji was the most renowned *Mahatma* in the whole of Uttarákhanda (Himalyas) and was recognised universally as possessing the most penetrative intellect and the most profound insight into the Vedantic Truth among the Sadhus. He was the author of some original and independent works in Sanskrit about Vedantic logic and philosophy. I was also told that he was a great Yogi who had practised meditation for several years remaining in some solitary region far away from human habitation. This roused in me a very strong desire to see the great saint. I availed myself of the earliest opportunity to go to Mangalnath's place of residence. He was on old man over 60. At the very first sight I felt an attraction for him. The impression he produced upon my mind confirmed what was said of him. I put questions to him like a student. He imparted instructions to me, and I treasured his answers as some of my most valued possessions.

At the very first meeting he gave me some practical lessons on the process of *Sadhana*. He advised me to practise long (*dirgha*) *Pranava*—the prolonged utterance of the mystic word "*Om*" (like the even and long-flowing sound of a single stroke of bell). He pronounced it in the right way to teach me. "Only "O" should be uttered with open lips," he taught, "and utterance should be long and continuous; after a while the lips should be closed, thereby producing the sound "M" (pronounce like this: with open lips 0-0-0-0-0, with closed lips M,M,M,M,M).

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Continue 'M' for a while, and concentrate your attention upon the stream of sound with your whole mind absorbed in it. He also showed me some *Mudra'* known as (*Sanmukhi*). The process of practising this *Mudra* consists in closing the two ears, the two eyes, the two nostrils with the fingers of the two hands and then uttering the Pranava in a long monotonous way so that the whole attention may be concentrated on the sound. I saw Viramdasji on my way home (cottage). Virtually he hid himself at day-time in a neighbouring jungle. He also was a *Vedanti-Sa'dhaka.*

However, I found, after a few days' practice of *Dirgha Pranava* that it was a very easy and effective process for quieting the mad manoeuvres of the mind. The main purpose of *Sa'dhana'* is to suppress fickleness and subdue evil thoughts, and these can be easily accomplished by this process. As it is monotonous and continuous stream of audible sound, there is less chance for fickle thoughts to creep into the mind during its utterance, and as divine ideas are associated with the sound *OM*, it is an effective check on bad thoughts also. Now, when I discovered that prolonged utterance was a better means to the deep mental concentration than the discontinuous utterance of the Divine Name, I gave more time to this practice. The aforesaid *Mudra* I did not practise long, as I found that it heated the brain.

Now let me sum up the different steps of my practice during this period. I used to devote some time to repetition of my previous *Mantra-jap* but much more time to the utterance of long-sounding *OM*—sometimes in a loud voice and sometimes in a low voice; when the

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mind touched the borderland of concentration, I began *Ajapa'*. After a few days' practice I could hear the sound called *Ana'hata* (sound not produced from any external sources) in Yogic nomenclature, at first in the form of prolonged bell-sounds and afterwards as a concert of many sweet sounds. At first it appeared to me like a sound of a bell rung by somebody outside, or like music produced by an orchestra party, but then I realised that it was no external sound at all. I used to abandon my wonted practice and concentrate on those sounds when they became audible. This paved the way for deeper concentration. By prolonged practice of *ajapa* I could experience a most enjoyable calm and void state of consciousness and also remain in *Kumbhaka* (suspended breath) for sometime. At this stage I used to see light on a few occasions. I did not regard the hearing of sounds or the seeing of light as of intrinsic value. I knew that these were commonplace experiences on the path of progress and did not indicate any high order of spiritual elevation. I was afterwards convinced that such experiences were merely bye-products of particular forms of physiological and psychical processes having little value to an earnest truth-seeker.

During this time I dwelt in some lonely cave. Owing to some cause which I could not ascertain (probably due to the bite of some microscopic insect), my whole body was infected with painful small-pox-like pimples. I had resolved to persevere in my *Sa'dhana'* in such a lonely place, so, though advised by Mangalnáthjee, I did not leave the place. However, after some treatment

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by the kind-hearted *Mahatma* I got relief. I read one or two Upanishads with Sankara's commentary now and then. Whenever I read the books I liked them and enjoyed them, but being stung with the thought that some period of time had been wasted without *Sadhana*, I left off study in disgust. Thus I proceeded on with my practice.

I was now labouring under the old notion that *Sadhana* was the only thing worth while in life and that *Vichara* or intellectual search for Truth was hardly of any avail in reaching the goal. On one occasion I remember, Mangalnathjee was giving lessons on *Panchadashi* (a famous treatise on Vedanta) to some Sadhu. Mangalnath was sitting just at the door of his room, the Sadhu just outside it on the Verandah, and I was sitting in the corner of the room. I was going on with my own practice without caring to hear the discussion. Not only that; afterwards I put to Mangalnathjee "Why do you waste your time in such *Vichara*?" On many other occasions also I admonished him in this way. Such an audacity on the part of a young Sadhu! To all this Swamijee would only smile. Most probably he ascribed such impertinence on my part to my ignorance of the higher course of spiritual self-discipline and treated with indulgence the free and bold expressions of my sincere conviction.

Only on two occasions, I remember, I got some sharp rebukes from him. Once I obstinately advocated Sri Ramkrishna's doctrine that Brahman is both *Saguna* and *Nirguna*, *Sakara* and *Niraakara* and challenged the contrary view of Swamiji. This brought forth a severe

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retort from him. On another occasion I made some remarks about the conduct of other Sadhus and showed undue partiality to my own Guru. This also provoked him to scold me for the perversity of my judgment. Let me narrate the two incidents.

For some time during this period I used to visit Ramáshrama (an áshrama established in the name of the widely reputed Swami Rámatirtha) every evening. The motive was that whenever I would go there I should get a cup of tea and this would help me in keeping late hours at night and continuing my *Sadhana* without fatigue for a long period. The owner of the Asrama, Lálá Baijnáth, retired Sessions Judge, (English translator of Yoga Vásista and Adhyátma Rámáyan) took advantage of my attendance, and perhaps of my mental weakness behind it, and entreated me to read Sri Ramakrishna-Kathámrita to him just for half an hour. I complied with the request of the host, and found pleasure in it, in as much as Kathamrita was a book dear to my heart. When Mangalnathjee came to know of this, he forbade me to wake late hours by taking such intoxicants. I obeyed him and gave up going there in the evening.

Now, one day when I went to Mangalnathjee's place I had with me a copy of Kathamrita, which I took from Lala Baijnath. He asked me, – "What's this book? I replied with enthusiasm that next to Vedanta it was the world's greatest religious classic. I spoke highly of the book again and again. Inquisitive about its contents, he asked me to read out some passages and translate into Hindi for him. I opened a page which contained what I considered to be one of the

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sublimest spiritual truths ever uttered by human tongue. The topic was :—Brahman is both *Nirguna.* (without attribute) and *Saguna* (with attribute); to a *Jnani,* He is *Nirguna;* and to a *Bhakta,* He is *Saguna.* I had to break off here because he exclaimed with a tone of contempt—"Enough."

I was wounded by the way in which he interrupted me and showed contempt to the saying of one whom I revered as the greatest religious teacher of the age. In spite of my respect for the saintly life and high erudition of the Swami, I boldly challenged him, saying, —" Why, don't you agree that Brahman is both *Saguna* and *Nirguna* ? Is it not the most comprehensive conception of Brahman ever preached by any religious teacher? To speak of Brahman as merely *Saguna* or as merely *Nirguna* must be a partial view about the Absolute Reality. Brahman being admittedly the sole ultimate cause of the world-order must be regarded as *Saguna,* —as eternally endowed with the power and will and knowledge for creating, sustaining and regulating this universe of diversities. Accordingly Brahman must be conceived as omnipotent and omniscient and ever-active. But this is what Brahman is in relation to this world-process. On the other hand, when Brahman is conceived as He is in and by Himself, apart from relation to the world, He must be thought of as *Nirguna,* as devoid of all powers and attributes. In and by Himself Brahman eternally transcends time and space, is eternally unrelated to the world-process, is eternally above all activity and relativity, while as the cause of the world of diversities He eternally manifests Himself

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in time and space, He is eternally related to and immanent in all the diversities of the world, He is eternally possessed of all the attributes implied in the creation and sustenance and regulation and destruction of all these diversities in time and space. Brahman must therefore be conceived by us as both immanent and transcendent, both active and inactive, both changeless and self-modifying, both above time and in time and space,—that is to say, as both *Saguna* and *Nirguna*. What is irrational in this conception? Is it not better and more reasonable than any one-sided conception of Brahman? If He is not *Saguna*, He cannot be the Cause of the world, and in that case there must be some other self-existent cause, by which Brahman should be limited. If He is not *Nirguna*, He should be subject to temporal and spatial relations, He should be subject to the bondage of the modifications of His powers and He should not be absolutely perfect. Hence He must be conceived as both, and this is what Sri Ramakrishna has taught in this book. I cannot find any rational ground for your showing disgust and contempt to this grand conception about Brahman.

The scholarly saint, Mangalnathji, was perhaps not only disgusted, but also amazed, at the audacity of a young *sa'dhu*, fresh from home and with little philosophical training, in thus throwing an open challenge to him and trying to convince him of the validity of a doctrine which appeared repulsive to his logical mind. Having listened to my arguments, he derisively remarked,—you boy, first learn to think logically and then try to argue on such big topics." All my arguments,

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however enthusiastically uttered, appeared to have no logical value to him. My vanity was humbled. He then pointed out the illogicality of my arguments and the logical grounds for his rejecting Sri Ramakrishna's conception of Brahman. He said,—you should first learn the true meaning of *guna*, and then form true ideas of what is meant by the term *Saguna* and what is meant by the term *Nirguna*. Then you should critically examine whether the terms Saguna and Nirguna can both be affirmed of the same Reality, either at the same time or at different times. Again, you have to form a conception of Brahman, which is logically maintainable, and then test which of the epithets,—*Saguna* and *Nirguna*,—is logically compatible with your conception." He then went on with his explanation of these terms.

What is the meaning of the term *guna*? It is used principally in two senses. In one sense *guna* means anything that binds (like a rope) and hence a bondage of any kind. *Satwa*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*, which are the constituents of the *Prakriti* of the Sánkhya system, are *gunas* in this sense, in as much as they bind the *Purushas* or spirits with the ever-modifying world and make them appear as enjoying and suffering and undergoing changes. In another sense, *guna* means an attribute or quality which determines the character of a substance. In this sense any power or knowledge or will or feeling, any virtue or vice, any special characteristic of any reality, should be connoted by the term *guna*. There is also a third sense of the term, in which it means a virtue or noble quality as distinguished from *dosha* (a vice or a bad quality), but this meaning is not of any philosophical importance.

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Now, if you take the first meaning of *guna*, then *Saguna* should mean one who is bound by any kind of limitation,—who is subject to any form of bondage,—who is lacking in absolute freedom, and *Nirguna* should mean one who is perfectly free from all kinds of bondage, absolutely devoid of any kind of limitation,—one whose existence and character are not in any way conditioned or influenced by any power within or without or any external entity or any internal tendency or attachment or aversion. Now, can you rationally think that Brahman (whatever His essential nature may be) is both *Suguna* and *Nirguna* in this sense,—that He is both *bound* and not-bound, both subject to limitations and conditions and absolutely free from all limitations and conditions ? Would not such a conception of Brahman involve an obvious self-contradiction ? Can you even think that Brahman is at one time *Saguna* and at another time *Nirguna*,—that He is *Saguna* when He comes into contact with *Prakriti* or creates the world of diversities and He is *Nirguna* before creation and after dissolution ? Would it not mean that Brahman is without freedom and under bondage so long as the world lasts ? Would it not amount to His losing His Brahmanhood during creation ? If you believe in the absolute freedom of Brahman from all kinds of bondage and limitation, you must think of Him as eternally *Nirguna* and never *Saguna* in the above sense of the term *guna*.

Then take the second meaning of the term *Guna*. In this sense, *Saguna* should mean *with attribute* and *Nirguna* should mean without any attribute. If you

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conceive Brahman as the omnipotent and omniscient cause of the real world-order, then you virtually accept the position that Brahman is *Saguna*. This world-order may be conceived as either having no beginning in time or as having beginning in time. If it has no temporal beginning, then Brahman must be conceived as eternally functioning as the cause,—as the creater and sustainer and governor,—of this world-process, and the attributes,—i. e. the power, knowledge, will, etc.—necessary for this causal function must be thought of as essentially pertaining to the nature of Brahman. How can He then be spoken of as *Nirguna* at the same time? If you hold that there was a time when the world-order did not exist and that Brahman brought it into existence at any point of time in the remote past, even then you must admit that the power, knowledge and will necessary for this creation had pertained to the nature of Brahman before they were manifested in creation, for otherwise the creation or the causal function would have been impossible. Attributes, even when unmanifested in any actual process of action, must be regarded as present in and forming part and parcel of the nature of the Reality, for otherwise there would be no possibility of manifestaion at any time. Thus if Brahman is supposed to be the real cause of a real world, He must be regarded as *Saguna*. You, as a rational being, have no right to speak of Him as *Saguna* and *Nirguna*.—possessed of infinite attributes and devoid of all attributes—in the same breath. But you should remember that if you accept this position and remain contented with conceiving Brahman as essentially *Saguna* and as really

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creating and governing the world of diversities, your Brahman will be subject to modifications, and He will be held responsible for all the evils prevalent in the world. Moreover, the essential nature of your Brahman would be what it is as related to and conditioned by this world in time and space and apart from relation to this world you would not be able to conceive of His existence at all. Have omnipotence, omniscience, etc. any meaning at all, independently of tha *omni* or all of this world of diversities? Hence your reason has a demand for the idea of one Brahman, Who exists independently of and above all the relativity of the world, Who is above time and space, Who is what He is in and by Himself. In pursuance of this demand you form the idea of *Nirguna* Brahman. Now, if for any reason you conceive Brahman as *Nirguna*,—as above all temporal and spatial relations, as devoid of all attributes and all conditions, you have to carefully consider whether you can at the same time logically assert that He is *Saguna* as well.

If Brahman is conceived as Nirguna, in the sense that He is devoid of all kinds of attributes, it will evidently imply that no positive attributes,—i. e. no power for action, no will for creation, no capacity for phenomenal knowledge, no feeling or emotion,—can possibly be affirmed of Him. He cannot then have any self-modification, whether of His own accord or under any foreign influence. He cannot have any relation to anything either within or outside Himself. In fact, any conception of *inside* or *outside* would be inconsistent with His attributeless nature. There can be no

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subject-object relation in His nature,—He cannot possibly be either the subject or the object of any knowledge or of any action. His nature must be absolutely undifferentiated,—He must be "absolutely one without a second." Thus, Nirguna Brahman must be pure Existence,—one differenceless, powerless, actionless, functionless, changeless Existence. As such Existence must be self-luminous,—not dependent upon any other entity for His self-revelation,—He must be thought of as pure Consciousness as well. Hence you cannot speak of Nirguna Brahman in any other term except as pure Existence-Consciousness. Whatever else you may think or speak about Him, this pure Existence-Consciousness will be particularised, and His nature as Nirguna will be lost. Whatever positive predication you may affirm of Brahman will particularise His character, will make Him subject to conditions, will deprive Him of His *Nirguna* character.

Thus you find that if you think of Brahman as *Nirguna*, you cannot at the same time think of Him as *Saguna*. He cannot be without attributes and with attributes at the same time. He cannot be thought of as one differenceless changeless powerless actionless Existence-Consciousness and at the same time the omnipotent and omniscient creator, sustainer and destroyer of the worldly diversities. Nirguna Brahman can have no relation whatsoever with world-order.

Nor can you consistently think that Nirguna Brahman *becomes* Saguna by being the cause of the world-order. If Brahman be conceived as Nirguna before creation and Saguna after creation, He is virtually

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thought of as subject to temporal conditions and modifications, and not *Nirguna* at all. Pure Existence-Consciousness must be above time and cannot have one nature at one time and a different nature at another time. He cannot therefore have any causal function at all. If you hold that before creation He is *Nirguna* in the sense that all His attributes are unmanifested at that stage, this would only show your want of comprehension of the true significance of *Nirguna*. Unmanifested attributes are as much attributes as the manifested attributes, because it is the attributes which are present in the unmanifested state that find perceptible expression in the manifested state. This can in no way be construed as the absence of attributes at any stage. This would rather mean that Brahman is always *Saguna*, His atributes being subject to different conditions. How can *Nirguna* become *Saguna* without exercising His free *will* to become so or being compelled by some other force to become so? In the former case His will should be regarded as active even in the Nirguna stage,—which is an obvious self-contradiction. In the latter case some other cause even superior to and more powerful than Brahman has to be admitted,—a cause which has the potency to transform Nirguna Brahman into Saguna Brahman. This would not only be inconsistent with the idea of Brahman being the sole cause of whatever happens, but also with the conception of Brahman, either as *Nirguna* or as *Saguna*. Thus you find that if you conceive Brahman as really Nirguna, you cannot maintain the position that He really becomes Saguna at any time or that He really becomes the cause of a real world.

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Accordingly from the ratioual point of view you have to make your choice between *Sagunn* and *Nirguna*, you cannot make any compromise between the two. You cannot say that Brahman is both *Saguna* and *Nirguna*, or that *Saguna* and *Nirguna* are two equally real aspects of the nature of Brahman. If they are regarded as two aspects of Brahman's nature, then logically *Sagunatwa* and *Nirgunatwa* are taken as two different attributes of Brahman, and this is meaningless, since the original idea of *Nirguna* is contradicted by the idea of *Nirgunatwa* being itself conceived as an attribute.

If you hold that Brahman, as He is in and by Himself, is *Nirguna* and that He has to be thought of as *Saguna* only in His relation to the world, and if you are now convinced that the one who is really *Nirguna* cannot by any means actually become *Saguna*, you, as a rational truth-seeker, ought to recognise (though it may not be palatable to your taste) that the *Nirgunatwa* is the real essential character of Brahman and that *Sagunatwa* is falsely attributed to His nature on account of His apparent causal relationship with the world. As your power of rational thinking develops, you will realise more and more clearly that *Nirguna* Brahman can never really become *Saguna* by being the creator of the world, but that He only illusorily appears as the cause of the world, which is nothing but the product of *Ignorance*. Truly speaking, the world *does not exist* in the same sense as Brahman exists,–it only *appears* to *exist*. Hence what Brahman appears to be in relation to this apparent world does not represent the essential nature

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of Brahman. What you call the *Saguna* aspect of Brahman in obedience to your erstwhile religious teachers is nothing but an illusory appearance of Brahman. Ii you put your statement logically, you can at most say that Brahman is *really Nirguna* and *illusorily Saguna*. How I*gnorance* can produce such a diversified world and make Brahman appear as *Saguna*, as the omnipotent and omniscient author of this world, – that is a different question, which you will understand gradually. First learn to think logically and boldly, so that your thought may not involve contradictions and may not be overclouded by old prejudices and predispositions.

On another occasion there was a talk about thc ideal of Sadhu life. Incidentally the conversation drifted to the mode of conduct of those Sadhus, who, having renounced the worldly life for the sake of Truth-realisation, created fresh fetters for themselves by building *maths*, opening *chhetras*, making disciples and engaging themselves in various forms of activities. My whole being was then surcharged with *vairagya* (aversion to all kinds of worldly affairs). To me all such actions appeared to be wholly inconsistent with Sadhu-life. I thought that having left one world they were building up a new world for themselves and losing sight of the ideal for which they adopted the life of mendicancy. It seemed to me that the time and energy which ought to be wholly devoted to deeper spiritual discipline and intense search for the Truth were being wasted by them in the service of name, fame, wealth and comfort. To Mangalnathji I made some bitter remarks against these worldly-minded sadhus.

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The old Swami gently retorted. – "What's your own Guru doing ?" I could not think that my guru's conduct could be judged by the same standard, by which the conduct of other sadhus was to be judged. I replied with vehemence, – "The standard of rightness and goodness applicable to ordinary spiritual aspirants cannot reasonably be applied to those saints who have realised the ultimate Truth and are fully established in spiritual knowledge. The outer conduct of these saints is determined by their *Prarabdha* (the momentum of their past actions). Their present actions they do not perform with any motive, with any desire for name or fame or wealth or comfort, with attachment to the fruits of their actions. Life and death, success and failure, praise and blame, wealth and poverty are all the same to them. They are only indifferent spectators to what appear to be done or enjoyed by them. How can you judge the seers and the seekers by the same standard ?" Mangalnathji sneeringly said,- "Yes, he is *your* guru and therefore he must be above all criticism ! His actions are governed by Prarabdh, and he is only an unconcerned onlooker of them, while the actions of all other sadhus are determined by their petty desires, worldly attachments, lower propensities, and they are going to hell ! What is the reason ? He is a Truth-seer, while others are mere seekers. What is the proof of his Truth-realisation ? The answer must be, – "Because he is my Guru." What other positive proof have you got of his Truth-realisation ? Is it not blind faith, born of ignorance ? If you judge, apply the same standard to all. Be impartial in your judgment.

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Shake off all your bias and prejudice. Be a truth-seeker in the true sense of the term. Don't be led away by irrational sentiments or crude beliefs or narrow bigoted outlook."

Sometimes I used to go to Manglnathji at night-time and stay there till morning. On almost all occasions he used to utter long-continued OM loudly with me, just to encourage me and rouse in me my enthusiasm and zeal for *Sadhana*. Sometimes I would go there at night with a petty motive. Out of respect for his high position as a saint and scholar at Rishikesh, the managers of the Chetra used to send to Mangalnathji a special evening meal. Since Maha'tma'ji refused this preferential treatment based on utter disregard for the other Sadhus living with him, enough food for ten or fifteen had to be sent to his *A'shrama*. It was, therefore, of considerable advantage to live with him. Many times did I avail myself of this advantage. He even allowed me as a guest in his A'shrama for a few days at a time. Thus our acquaintance ripened to intimacy. The more I came in intimate contact with him, the more did he initiate me into the Vedantic line of thinking and the Vedantic mode of advance in the path of spirituality. He impressed upon my rational mind the unassailableness of the Vedantic Logic and the weak points of the other systems. He had a convincing way of putting his arguments and I could not help accepting them, though they sometimes struck at the root of my long-cherished conceptions. He practically conquered me and won me over to his method of approach to Reality and his conception of the ultimate spiritual

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ideal of human life. Let me give my readers a general idea of the Vedantic: logic which he presented to me and which gave a new turn to my intellectual and religious life.

It is a fact of universal human experience that we live and move and have our being in a world of objective realities. No one can deny this fact. Hence all our search for Truth must start from this fundamental fact. We have to begin with the analysis of this experience. The first question that may be raised is,—what is the guarantee for the existence of this objective world? The answer which every ordinary man spontaneously gives and which even the most acute philosopher can possibly give is,—our sense-perception is the sole guarantee for the reality of this objective world. We know that the world of diversities exists and we have no doubt about it, because we actually and directly perceive these diversities of the world and we all in our normal waking states perceive the same thing in the same way. Therefore normal sense-perception must be accepted as the basis of all our knowledge. The nature of every object of the world must be regarded primarily as what it is in its appearence to the normal sense-experience of men in general. If we want to form a consistent conception of this objective world as a whole, we must start with a thoughtful analysis of our normal sense-experience. In this procedure there should be no difference of opinion.

Now let us proceed with the analysis. Every normal man is endowed with five senses of perception,—

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viz, the sense of hearing, the sense of touch, the sense of sight, the sense of taste and the sense of smell. It is these five senses which are sole primary sources of our knowledge about the objective realities. The ultimate objective realities must be objects of preception to these senses. Now, we find that the capacity of each of these senses is limited and unique. The sense of hearing can receive only sound, the sense of touch can receive only touch, the sense of sight only colour, the sense of taste only taste and the sense of smell only smell. No sense can in its original nature perform the function of another sense. Now, these senses being the sole primary sources of our knowledge about the nature of the objective world, it may be legitimately concluded that the ultimate characteristics of the realities of this world are and must be sound, touch, colour, taste and smell. Each of these characteristics is unique in its nature and none can be resolved into or derived from another. Each of them can be perceived by only one unqiue sense, and by no other. Again, each of these unique characteristics, as perceived by a unique sense, being of the nature of an attribute, must be conceived as pertaining to and characterising a particular elementary substance. There must accordingly be five kinds of elementary substances characterised respectively by five elementary attributes, which are the objects of the five special senses. In Sanskrit these elementary substances are called *bhutas*, and they must be, on the basis of our sense-experience, regarded as the ultimate constituents of the objective world. These *bhutas* are named by the Hindu philosophers A'ka'sh (Ether), V'a'yu (Air),

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Tej (Fire), A'p (Water) and Prithi (Earth). It should be noted that the ultimate *bhutas* of Hindu Philosophy should be carefully distinguished from the familiar gross material substances known by these names, since each of these is a composite substance possessing all the five kinds of attributes in more or less degrees. The ultimate *bhuta a'ka'sa* is to be supposed as characterised by nothing but *sound*, and similar should be the conception of each of the other *bhutas*. Accordingly, no ultimate *bhuta* can possibly be the object of perception to more than one sense. All the gross substances which we actually perceive with our five senses operating together have to be conceived as having a composite nature—as composed of all the five *bhutas* and hence possessing all the five kinds of attributes.

Thus a close analysis of our normal perceptual knowledge leads us to the conclusion that the objective world of our experience is ultimately constituted of five kinds of elementary substances with five kinds of unique unanalysable elementary properties cognised by five special senses. If there exist any other distinct kinds of matter in the external world, possessing altogether distinct kinds of properties, we cannot know them, since we have to know the things of the world through our five special senses (*Indriyas*), which can perceive only these characteristics of matter.

Let us now proceed further with the analysis of our perceptual knowledge. If these senses were unrelated to one another and if they were the sole distinct and independent sources of knowledge, there would be no difinite perception of concrete realities at all.

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Every concrete object is perceived as possessing the five kinds of sensible properties, while each of the senses can receive impressions of only one kind of properties. How then can there be any perception of multiple-propertied concrete objects without the harmonisation and unification of the operations of those senses? Hence to account for the possibility of the knowledge of substances possessing the five kinds of objects of the five senses as properties or characteristics, a faculty or power for the harmonisation and unification of the operations of the five senses is necessary. That faculty must be associated with each of the senses, must put together and arrange and combine all the special objects of the special senses and convert them into knowledge of concrete realities. Thus we are bound to admit the presence, behind and along with the senses, of a faculty which can simultaneously modify itself into the forms of all objects of all senses and unify, interpret and objectify the materials supplied by the senses. This faculty is the Mind, which is thus the lord of the senses, the unifier and organiser of the senses and the true faculty of knowledge of all the objects of experience. It is really this mind which forms contact with and perceives the objects through the senses. It not only perceives them, but also retains them in memory in the forms of ideas and reproduces them whenever necessary. All our perceptions and recollections are really mental modifications in the forms of objects.

Let us now make a deeper inquiry into the nature of the mind on the basis of our undeniable experience.

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From what has been said before it is evident that the five special senses are the special instruments for the perception of particular aspects of concrete objective realities, and the mind is the general faculty for the perception of concrete realities with its diverse aspects. The particular sensations are only impressions produced by contact between senses and particular properties of the objects, but they cannot produce any real knowledge of objects, while the perceptions amounting to real knowledge are the modifications of the mind into the forms of objects possessing those properties. The senses without the mind can give us no knowledge at all. But the mind, though depending upon the senses for the perception of external objects, has its own field of direct perception. We experience within ourselves various kinds of desires and feelings,—we feel pleasure and pain, anger and fear and hatred, sympathy and love and pity, craving for food and shelter, yearning for knowledge and happiness, attachment to particular objects, etc. etc. All these are nothing but diverse forms of mental modifications, and these modifications are also the objects of our direct perception. How do we perceive them? Not certainly by the special senses, which have no capacity for perceiving them. Either we are to suppose that the mind itself perceives its own modifications or we have to admit the existence of some other reality capable of perceiving them. Again, all particular perceptions are, as has been found before, mental modifications. Hence the mind's perception of its own modifications would imply its modification of one kind into the forms of its

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modifications of other kinds. Further, it should imply that the mind, inspite of or in and through all its diverse forms of modifications, remains the same mind, and its unity is by no means lost. Whether it is possible for the mind to pass through all the diverse forms of modifications (along with the senses and behind the senses) and at the same time to remain the permanent seer of them all is a puzzling problem of philosophical speculation.

But the complexity of the nature of the mind does not end here,—with the perception of external objects and the perception of the various mental states and processes. The mind, as has already been noticed, retains somehow what it perceives in the forms of subtle ideas in its subconscious layers and brings them back on the surface of its consciousness in regular orders whenever occasions arise. How can these phenomena of memory and remembrance be adequately explained? Again, the mind not only retains and reproduces what is perceived, it has the capacity to form concepts of general classes and general laws, to form plans and designs for the realisation of ideals in the future, to imagine things not in actual existence within the range of perception, and so on. All these are of course self-modifications of the mind into diverse forms. Further, we experience three states of the mind,—waking, dream and deep sleep. In deep sleep the mind does not seem to be functioning at all, but still we have remembrance of it and this remembrance implies that there must be some sort of experience, i. e. some sort of mental function, even at that stage. The more we study the nature of

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the mind, the more we are convinced that it is like a vast organism, in which there are various departments, various kinds of functions, various states and processes, but in which nevertheless a harmony and unity is maintained.

Now the problem is,—how can this mind and its diverse operation be rationally explained? In order to arrive at a satisfactory solution of this problem, we have to carefully consider a good many questions. First, it is found that the diverse forms of the states and modifications of the mind are as much objects of our internal experience as the gross material things of the world are objects of our external experience. *Objects* of experience necessarily imply the presence of a *subject* to which they appear as objects, by which they are illumined and revealed and by reference to which they acquire the property of *being known*. Now, can the mind, which is modified into these diverse forms and whose very existence is known in the forms of modifications (gross and subtle), be itself the subject or knower or illuminer of its own modifications? This is obviously not a reasonable hypothesis, since in that case the mind has to be conceived as at the same time changeless and changing, subject and object, illuminer and illumined, self-luminous and non-self-luminous. Hence it is necessary to admit behind the mind a higher spiritual entity, which is the changeless self-luminous witness of all the changing states and modifications of the mind, which by its own luminosity illumines all the cognitive, emotional and volitional states of the mind as well as all the objects into the forms of which the mind is modified.

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Secondly, it is a matter of common experience that the mind does not exist always in the conscious state. It exists in conscious, subconscious and unconscious states. In deep sleep there is no distinct consciousness, but still the mind must be regarded as existing at that stage, for otherwise it would not return to the waking state with all its previous dispositions, characteristics and memories. Again, the impressions of our past experiences are conserved in the mind in some subtle conditions, but most of them are not present on the surface of our consciousness. We become distinctly conscious of them, when they are occasionally recollected. Hence a subconscious region of the mind must be admitted. Further, we have got many instincts, of which we are not distinctly conscious, but which constitute our basic nature and exercise considerable influence from the unconscious or subconscious planes of the mind upon the affairs of the conscious plane. Now, the conscious, the subconscious and the unconscious states, though belonging to the same mind, are distinct from and related to one another. These three distinct and related states of the mind must be illumined and witnessed by one self-luminous consciousness, which must be essentially of a different character from the phenomenal consciousness of mental modifications, which must remain constant and changeless in the midst of all the changing states of the mind, which, while remaining above and wholly unaffected by the mental changes, reveals and unifies these changes as pertaining to the same mind.

Thirdly, it is our fundamental assumption based on

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normal experience that a system of real objects exists in the outer world and that we know these objects as they really are by means of sense–contact and appropriate modifications of the mind. Unless the objective reality of the diverse phenomena of the world be recognised, there would be different subjective worlds for different individual men, knowledge would be meaningless, intercommunication and uniformity of behaviour among men would be impossible, all life and conduct would be impossible. Hence the objective validity of our knowledge must be taken for granted. Therefore the question is–what does this objective validity of our knowledge presuppose? Knowledge is a phenomenon, which is, as has been found before, of the nature of the modification of mind into the forms of real objects. This implies that objects exist independently of the mind, they exist as unknown before there is relation between them and the mind, this unknownness of the objects is destroyed and knowledge of them is produced through their contact with the senses and the mind and the mind's modification into their forms. This being the nature of valid knowledge, as taken for granted, we must seek for the ultimate guarantee of such validity of knowledge. The mind as such cannot give the guarantee, since the mind cannot know the existence of any object prior to its knowledge of the object nor the correspondence or agreement between its own modification and the independent nature of the object. Hence it is logically necessary to recognise the existence of a transcendent consciousness, which is the changeless witness of all the elements involved in the validity of knowledge, viz. the

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existence and nature of the object prior to its knowledge, its character of unknownness, the contact between the mind-senses and the object, the destruction of the quality of unknownness and the production of the quality of the knownness in it, the correspondence between the mind's modification and the independent nature of the object. Thus we find that the explanation for the validity of knowledge can be furnished only by the transcendent witness-consciousness.

Fourthly, it is recognised by all that our individual minds as well as all the objects of our actual and possible experience constituting the world-system are of a contingent, dependent, relative and derivative nature and are subject to spatial and temporal limitations. No object has any knowable character in and by itself, independent of and unrelated to other objects of experience and the experiencing subject. Every object is causally related to other objects. Every object has production and destruction. There are relations of co-existence and succession amongst diverse objects of experience. The individual minds also are external to one another, There are intra-mental and extra-mental phenomena of our experience. The minds modify themselves in temporal order. All these show the contingent, dependent and derivative character and the temperal and spatial limitations of the minds and the worldly objects. Now, realities of such nature cannot evidently be self-existent and self-revealing. Whatever is self-existent must be eternal, must exist necessarily by its own inherent right of existence, and its existence therefore cannot be of a contingent dependent, relative,

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derivative and temporal nature. A self-existent being cannot have any origination or destruction, cannot have any dependence for its existence and essential character on its relation to other entities. Its manifestation also should not depend upon its being presented to and witnessed by any other conscious being. A perfectly independent entity ought to be self-existent and self-luminous. Now, as the minds and their objects are evidently not self-existent and self-luminous, they must be admitted to be dependent for their existence and appearance upon some self-existent and self-luminous Reality. From our previous discussion we have found such a self-existent and self-luminous Reality in the transcendent Witness-consciousness. This Transcendent Witness-Consciousness must therefore be regarded as the self-existent and self-luminous Substratum of the minds and their objects,—as the Reality by whose existence and luminosity they all exist and are illumined.

Fifthly, a question may arise as to whether there is only one Transcendent Consciousness behind all individual minds or there are different such consciousnesses behind different minds. It follows logically from our previous discussion that this self-existent self-luminous transcendent Consciousness must be one. It is above all temporal and spatial conditions, above all relations of succession and simultaneity, above all distinctions of within and without, any kind of difference between one Transcendent Consciousness and another is inconceivable. Moreover, if there be plurality of Transcendent Consciousnesses, their separate existences and their distinctions from and relations to one

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another must be objects of experience or knowledge to some other higher Transcendent Consciousness, to which they must appear simultaneously and by which they must be illumined. That is to say, in that case they would not have the nature of self-existent self-luminous Transcendent Consciousness at all. What is above time and space, above relativity and objectivity, cannot be many. It must be one and absolutely one. Thus we must admit the existence of one self-existent changeless Transcendent Consciousness as the substratum of all individual minds and their objects.

Hence we arrive at the conclusion that for the adequate rational explanation of our normal experience we are led to the conception of one eternal non-dual Transcendent Consciousness, which alone is self-existent and self-luminous, which alone exists necessarily and independently, which is above duality and plurality, above change and relativity, above all conditions and limitations. This Transcendent Consciousness is called *Brahman* by the *Sruti* (*Vedas*).

Sixthly, the aforesaid conclusion leads us to another conclusion, which would appear to ordinary intelligence as of a revolutionary character. It has been found that our individual minds and all the objects of their valid knowledge have contingent, dependent, relative and derivative existence, while the one Transcendent Consciousness alone has necessary, independent, absolute and eternal existence, that the former are subject to temporal and spatial conditions, while the latter is above all such conditions, that the former are constantly

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changing many, while the latter is the eternally changeless One. It has also been ascertained that the plurality of individual minds and the diversities of objective world related to them exist by the existence of, are revealed by the luminosity of the Transcendent Consciousness. The self-existent self-luminous infinite eternal absolute Transcendent Consciousness is accordingly the ultimate Ground of the existence and appearance of all minds and all objects. This being the case, can we reasonably maintain that the Transcendent Consciousness and the mind-world system are of the same order of reality? Can we say that the minds and their objects are as real as the Transcendent Consciousness? Can we consistently assert that the contingent dependent relative and derivative realities are *real* in the same sense in which the necessary self-existent absolute eternal Reality is real? Evidently these questions demand a negative answer. The Transcendent Consciousness has obviously reality or existence of a higher order than the plurality of minds and objects.

Now we venture to go a step further. The terms real and existent (and any other term synonymous with them) cannot be reasonably applied in their absolute and unrestricted sense to such entities, as have origination and destruction, as sometimes appear as existent and sometimes disappear as non-existent, as do not exist in and by themselves eternally, as undergo changes, transformations or modifications. The Real in the true sense of the term must be necessarily eternally and absolutely real, and being real by its own inherent independent nature, can never

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become unreal. Hence the minds and their objects cannot be regarded as real and existent in the absolute sense. Only the Transcendent Consciousness, which exists in and by itself, which exists necessarily independently and eternally without any change or modification, can be called truly real and existent in this sense. Accordingly in this absolute sense our minds and all the objects of our normal experience and knowledge should be regarded as unreal and non-existent,—that is to say, not-self-existent, not independently real. Thus, what is real from the standpoint of our normal experience is unreal from the absolute standpoint, what is undeniably real in the world of relativity appears as unreal when viewed in the light of the absolute significance of the term *real*. Accordingly we have to accept the conclusion that the *finite*, contingent, relative, derivative, transitory realities, which constitute the world of our normal experience, are unreal from the absolute standpoint;—though undeniably appearing as real, they are not truly real, and hence their appearance as real is of the nature of *illusion* or *dream*. Just as in illusion or dream the objects of experience appear as real so long as the illusion or dream continues, but they are unreal from the standpoint of normal valid knowledge, so the objects of valid normal experience also appear as real so long as they are viewed in the plane of normal experience, but they are unreal from the standpoint of absolute reality.

Now, a question of great logical importance arises. The irresistible demand of our reason for an adequate

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explanation of our mental phenomena and the world of our normal experience has led us to the recognition of the necessary changeless absolute existence of one self-luminous Transcendent Consciousness. This pure Existence-Consciousness has been found to be above time and space, above all change and relativity. The mind and its objects have been found to appear as existent by the existence and luminosity of the Transcendent Existence-Consciousness. Here the question is,—how can the mind and its objects be made to appear as existent by the Existence-Consciousness without any kind of relation between them and without any kind of functioning on the part of the latter? That there can be no real relation and no real functioning attached to the Transcendent Consciousness is evident from Its essentially unrelated and unmodified nature. There can be neither any real causal relation nor any real Substance-attribute relation nor any real relation of coexistence or conjunction between the Transcendent Reality and these apparent or illusory realities. On the other hand, without some sort of relation these apparent or illusory realities which constitute the world of our experience, cannot be regarded as being made to appear as real by the existence and luminosity of the Transcendent Absolute Reality. The only kind of relation which we can conceive consistently with the essential nature of the Transcendent Consciousness is the relation of false identification (*adhya'sa*) like that between the illusory snake and the real rope of our normal experience. The world of our normal experience (including the minds) appears illusorily

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as existent on the substratum of the Transcendent Consciousness and is apparently identified with It.

Try to form a clear notion about the unique inexplicable relation between the world of phenomenal plurality (including the plurality of minds) and the Transcendent noumenal Consciousness on the analogy of the relation between the illusory snake and its substratum, the rope. Is the snake really produced from the rope, or does the rope modify or transform itself into the snake? Of course not. Does the snake exist side by side with the rope? Of course not. Does the appearance of the snake create any duality in the rope? No. Does the nature of the rope become in any way really qualified or limited or conditioned or influenced by the illusory presence of the snake? No. Is the rope in any way objectively related to the illusory snake? No. Does then the illusory snake exist independently of, apart from and altogether unrelated to the rope? That view also cannot be accepted. Should you then say that the illusory snake does not exist at all? Certainly such an assertion would be awkward, in as much as the very appearance of the snake is a proof of its *some sort of existence*. But would you say that this 'some sort of existence' of the apparent snake is of the same standard of reality or objective value as the existence of the rope, which is its substratum? If you apply the term *real* to the rope, can you apply the same term in the same sense with regard to the snake? It cannot be so applied. When the illusion disappears, or is destroyed, what happens to the snake? At that time it becomes evident that the

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snake does not exist there, never did it exist there nor can it ever possibly exist there, but that the rope alone exists there and has existed there all along in its essential nature. Does the question of the relation between the rope and the snake arise at that time? No, since the snake does not exist at all and the rope alone is existent at that time. Does the question arise while the illusion continues? No, since during that period only the snake appears to be existent and the rope is completely veiled and its existence is unknown. To whom there does the question arise and when? When a person knows that the rope is the real entity and that this rope appears or appeared as a snake—whether to somebody else or to himself,—when the ideas of the real rope and the apparent snake are both present in his mind, then only such a question can arise. How should he then characterise the relation? Yes, this is a puzzling question, since he has to determine the nature of a relation between what he knows to be real and what he knows to be falsely appearing on it, between a real entity and its illusory appearance. It cannot be characterised in terms of any of the recognised real realities, since all such relations are between realities of the same order,—e. g. between two equally real substances, or between a real cause and a real effect, or between a real substance and its real attributes, and so on. Hence the relation between a reality and its illusory appearance seem to be *inexplicable* in terms of the recognised logical relations. Nevertheless, even such an inexplicable relation must be recognised, since illusion also is a phenomenon which

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cannot be denied. This relation is characterised as *adhyas* or false superimposition or illusory identification. Look again. Can you say that the illusory snake is wholly different from the rope? No, since the apparent snake appears to exist by the existence of the rope and does not exist independently of it. Can you then assert that this snake is absolutely non-different from the rope? Such an assertion also would be unwarranted, since the characteristics of the apparent snake are different in important respects from those of the rope. To assert that the apparent snake and the real rope are both different and non-different from each other would involve an obvious self-contradiction. Accordingly, we arrive at the position that the apparent snake is neither different nor non-different nor both-different-and-non-different from the real rope, which appears illusorily as the snake. Hence it is an inexplicable relation. The apparent existence of the snake also is an inexplicable existence, which is distinct from real existence (like that of the rope), total non-existence (like that of the hare's horn) and both existence and non-existence.

Now, if you are asked, what is the cause of this apparent or inexplicable existence of the illusory snake, what should be your answer? Will you not answer that it is ignorance about the real character of the rope, which is the cause of the appearance of the snake in its place? The true character of the rope is veiled by ignorance, so that it remains there merely as an *indetermined something*, – merely as *this* (*idam*), – while the character of the snake is foisted upon or falsely

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attributed to it. The determined character of the snake is identified with the indetermined *this-ness* of the rope. It is in this way that the apparent snake seems to be born or produced on the rope as its substratum. When you agree to this explanation, you have to note that here you cannot take ignorance purely in a negative sense,—in the sense of mere absence of knowledge, because mere negation of knowledge of the rope cannot possibly produce the positive appearance of the illusory snake. Ignorance has to be conceived as a positive entity, which veils the real nature of the thing (the rope) and makes it appear as something which it is not. This ignorance obviously admits of modification, and its modification determines the character of the illusory object in the form of which the real thing is made to appear. It has also to be remembered that if this positive ignorance had been a real entity,—a real substance or power,—it would have produced a real effect, and in that case the snake produced would have been as real as the rope, upon which it is produced. This, of course, you cannot admit. Again, if the ignorance had been wholly non-existent, the true nature of the rope would not have been veiled and the apparent snake would not have been produced at all. Hence the existence of this ignorance also had to be conceived as neither wholly real nor wholly unreal, but as inexplicable. This inexplicable ignorance, though somehow existing in connection with the rope, does not, it is quite obvious, in any way modify the real nature of the rope, and inspite of all its operations the rope always remains what it truly is.

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Now, if all the questions relating to the illusory appearance of the rope in the form of a snake has been clearly solved to your rational satisfaction, then return to the problem of the relation between this world of diversities and the Transcendent Consciousness or Brahman. In the whole series of arguments just adduced, substitute the phenomenal world for the illusory snake and the Transcendent Consciousness or Brahman for the rope, and the difficulties in the way of your understanding will disappear. You can now form a true conception of the nature of the existence of the world, the nature of the existence of Brahman and the nature of the relation between them. The phenomenal world has an apparent or inexplicable existence, while Brahman alone has a real existence from the absolute standpoint. The phenomenal world is neither really produced from Brahman, nor does it really exist side by side with Brahman, nor does it in any way qualify the true nature of Brahman. Brahman exists in and by Itself eternally, without any change or modification or limitation, as the sole Absolute Reality. The phenomenal world of temporal and spatial diversities is an illusory appearance, existing by Brahman's existence, manifested by Brahman's luminosity, falsely identified with Brahman and having a neither-real-nor-unreal inexplicable existence. This apparent world cannot be said to be either different from or non-different from or both different and non-different from Brahman; but though having existentially no difference from Brahman, illusorily appears as of a different character from It. The cause of this illusory appearance of the phenomenal

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world must be some inexplicable Cosmic Ignorance, which veils the true nature of the Transcendent Consciousness and makes It appear as the world of diversities. When the true knowledge of the essential character of Brahman is attained, this Ignorance is destroyed and the world is found to have no real existence at all. In the light of true knowledge it is realised that this world of differences never really existed in the past, does not really exist at present and will never really exist in the future. Really Brahman is the differenceless attributeless one without a second.

This positive and dynamic, but inexplicable, Ignorance has been sought to be made more intelligible by the Vedantist teachers on the analogy of magic. The magician, by the exercise of his magical power, makes a display of various kinds of illusory objects which appear as real to the spectators, but which produce no change in the nature of, or create no illusion upon, the mind of the magician himself. It is the indefinable magical power of the magician which is the cause of the phenomena. In the same way the inscrutable Ignorance produces diversities of illusory phenomena which appear as real to all finite minds, but which produce no modification in the essential nature of the transcendent consciousness or Brahman. On this analogy this Cosmic Ignorance is described in Vedantic literature as the Máyá of Brahman. But it should be noted that the analogy should not be carried too far. In the case of magic the magician exerts his will in the exercise of his power, but there is no such will on the part of Brahman. The power of the magician is of

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the nature of an attribute to him, but the Cosmic Ignorance or what is called the Maya of Brahman cannot be described as an attribute of Brahman or as in any way really related to It. Brahman is eternally untouched by Maya, still Maya makes It appear as innumerable orders of conscious and unconscious realities. On account of this defect in the conception of magic as applied to Brahman, the Vedantist logicians prefer the term Ignorance to Maya in this connection.. The analogy of dream also is resorted to by them to explain their position. Just as the dreamer projects himself into various kinds of dream-objects and at the same time remains as the unmodified witness of them all, so Brahman is supposed to appear to Itself in the forms of various orders of created objects, but Itself transcends them and remains unaffected witness of them. But here also it should be remembered that the analogy should not be carried too far. The dreams of individual minds are produced by various causes which are externally related to the minds and which create various modifications in them. But that is not the case here. To Brahman there is no external cause and It is in no way affected or modified by the so-called dream-objects which appear on It as their substratum. Thus, whenever you try to form a true conception of any metaphysical truth with the help of any analogy, you should always be cautious as to how far the comparison should be drawn and beyond what limits it must not be allowed to go.

This being the necessary conclusion to which rational logic leads us, the ultimate end of human life

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is to get out of this Ignorance and to realise the non-duality of the self-existent self-luminous Reality, Brahman. This realisation would of course involve the realisation of the non-difference of the self and the world from Brahman,—the realisation of the Upanishadic truth,—अयमात्मा ब्रह्म, सर्वं खल्विदं ब्रह्म—"I am Brahman", "This whole universe is Brahman". The Sadhana of a sincere truth-seeker should be directed to this end and should therefore principally consist in *Vichara* or philosophical reflection. All other forms of self-discipline, whether physical or mental, should be adopted and practised only as subsidiary (बहिरंग) to this, as means of making the body and the mind fit for the esoteric (अन्तरंग) Sadhana leading to Truth-realisation.

When Mangalnathji with his usual calmness and serenity gave me lessons on the Vedantic Logic, I used to raise objections. With undisturbed patience he would listen to my counter-arguments and would refute them to my satisfaction. I would put to him,—'Well, Swamiji, if the world of diversities had no real existence, how could it be an object of experience? We find that, with our mind and senses wide awake, we actually experience the diverse kinds of objects, we demonstrate their existence and special characteristics by means of various scientific experiments, we make use of them in accordance with our knowledge of them and we see that they serve the purposes we have in view, and so on and so forth. How can such a scientifically demonstrated world of objects be unreal and illusory?" Mangalnathji would give various examples of illusions which we experience in the waking state. We experience

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a snake before us, when what really exists there is a rope. We take an oyster for a piece of silver. We perceive two moons, while there is only one. We see the sun and the moon as of the nature of small bright plates, while really they are big bodies. And so on. When we attain true knowledge of these things, we no longer regard them as what they appeared to us. True knowledge destroys illusions. Sometimes even after true knowledge is attained, the actual experience is not changed, as in the cases of the sun, the moon, etc., but the knowledge of them is no longer vitiated by the illusory experience. Thus our actual experience even in our normal mental conditions is not the criterion of Truth. What is established as true by the reason should be accepted as really true. What we ordinarily call scientific knowledge is nothing but carefully regulated phenomenal knowledge. It does not question the existence of phenomena, just as a dreaming person does not question the existence of the validity of the dream. It can only remove errors with regard to phenomena. But metaphysical knowledge is based on a higher order of reasoning. It questions the validity of empirical phenomenal knowledge and attempts to find out the ultimate truth. Just as when the knowledge of the phenomenon of the rope or the oyster present before us is attained, the appearance of the snake or silver in its place is regarded as false and illusory, so when the true knowledge of the ultimate Reality is attained, the whole phenomenal world is known to have only an apparent or illusory existence. The world of diversities is false not from the standpoint of phenomenal reality, but from

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the stand-point of ultimate or Absolute Reality. What exists independently and necessarily and therefore eternally and absolutely, can alone be regarded as ultimately real. An Ultimate Reality must exist in, by and for itself. Whatever is demonstrated to have only a derivative dependent, transitory and relative existence cannot be said to exist in, by and for itself and cannot therefore be regarded as an Ultimate Reality. The world is accordingly proved not to be ultimately real. The Ultimate Reality is its substratum अधिष्ठान, on which it appears. So long as the Ultimate Reality remains veiled through Ignorance, the phenomenal world is taken as ultimately real, and as soon as the Ultimate Reality (i. e. Brahman) shines in knowledge, this false notion of the ultimate existence of the phenomenal world disappears. The Ultimate Reality or Brahman is realised as the Truth of the self and the Truth of the world.

Again a question was raised:—"If the world of plurality has not a real existence in the same sense in which Brahman is real, then why should the Upanishads speak of Brahman as the cause of the world, as having "become many" बहु स्यां प्रजायेय? The effect ought to be regarded as having the same order of existence as the cause, for otherwise the relation of cause and effect cannot exist between them." To this Mangalnathji answered:—"The cause-effect relation is first introduced in the Upanishads to show that the world is not explicable in and by itself, that Brahman (the Ultimate Reality) alone can furnish an adequate ground for its apparent existence. But they further point out that the

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so-called effect has no existence apart from the existence of the cause and that therefore what is spoken of as the cause has alone the Ultimate real existence and what is called the effect has only apparent existence वाचारम्भनं etc. Creation is described only for the purpose of negation of its supposed real existence अध्यारोप and अपवाद. This अध्यारोप (attribution) and अपवाद (denial) he would explain by giving an illustration. In order to explain to a person who cannot understand मयदान (open space) or who doubts its existence, it is necessary to ask him to plant several trees in some space and allow them to grow there, and then to cut them all, just to make him understand what is meant by open space. Just in the same way in order to make an aspirant understand the real nature of Brahman beyond cause-effect relation, it is necessary at first to attribute this world to It (अध्यारोप) i. e. to establish that the world has come out of Brahman and exists in and by It (It is the cause of all), and then to declare नेति नेति (not this, not that—अपवाद—it is no real cause of anything, gross or subtle); now by these two processes of instruction it is understood that what remains as the Ultimate is Brahman.

Thus the scholarly saint met all my objections and step by step converted me to his way of thinking. He used to instruct me about the Vedantic Sadhana as well. He would lay emphasis upon अभ्यास and वैराग्य continuous meditation upon the absolute reality and transcendent character of Brahman along with non-attachment to and renunciation of all worldly concerns. I remember how he illustrated it by means of an

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example. Suppose there is a reservoir of water here, and you have to empty it of all its contents. To accomplish this purpose, you have to dig a canal, through which water will pass out. At the same time you should construct an embankment, so that outside water may not find entrance into it. These two should be simultaneous and not at different times. Otherwise the purpose of clearing the water off will not be served. Thus to clear the mind of all desires and to have it fixed upon Ultimate Reality, *Vairagya* or renunciation and *Abhyasa* or concentration must be practised simultaneously.

Let me here briefly state the position at which I arrived in consequence of my association with Sadhu Mangalnathji at Rishikesh. My mind now became much more intellectual than before. I learnt to argue more logically and more systematically. I became acquainted with the main doctrines of the principal systems of Indian philosophy and the logical methods by which they were established by their followers. Of course I had not yet any first-hand acquaintance with them. I generally got the Vedantists' versions of those systems. I learnt to find faults in their arguments from the Vedantic point of view. By a general review of those other systems, I was for the time being perfectly convinced that the non-dualist Vedanta of Sankara was the only logically faultless system of philosophy and that all other systems were vitiated by innumerable logical fallacies. I had not yet studied the higher philosophical literature either of Vedanta or of any other system. But the arguments which I got at second hand

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in favour of Non-dualism and against the other rival systems were regarded by me as quite enough for leading me to the final conclusion and satisfying my truth-seeking spirit. I was taught the possible alternatives with regard to the nature of Brahman, A'tman and the world of experience, and of all these alternative views I found none acceptable except the one advocated by non-dualist Vedanta. Dualism, Modified Dualism, Dualism-cum-Non-dualism, Deism, Theism, etc, all these were ultimately incapable of standing logical criticism, whereas pure Non-dualism could hold its own against all logical criticism. Its dialectic method was the finest and most convincing method. When the Vedantic truth was unveiled to me, my yearning for understanding Reality intellectually which I had cherished from my early youth seemed at last to be satisfied. Though whenever in my earlier life I accepted any theory as correct I felt elated that I found out the Truth, I felt now that my previous convictions were unanalytic and uncritical, while my present conviction was based on solid logic. I thought that I had at this time thoroughly examined every possible position and that there could not be any mistake in my present conclusion. Hence I felt happy at the thought that I at last intellectually ascertained the Ultimate Truth.

Now, I remember, how during this period I experienced a change in my view about *Avata'ra* or Divine Incarnation. I had naturally come to believe in such matters from my early boyhood. The ideas were implanted in my mind at home and these became

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strengthened by the teachings of religious persons whose sweet companionship I enjoyed in youth. My love for the Gitá was also a potent factor in moulding such faith. Now when I got the Vedántic ideas and began to think over them in my own way, various questions arose in my mind. Could the conception of Divine Incarnation be logically maintained in accordance with the position of the Vedánta? I doubted it and began to reflect seriously on the matter. My thoughts took the following shape. God can be conceived in three different ways,—God as purely the efficient cause of the world, God as both the material and efficient cause (real) (either directly through Prakriti as His Energy or indirectly through Prakriti as His attribute—essentially different though inseparably related to Him) and God as really neither the material nor the efficient cause, but illusorily appearing as the cause.

According to the first view God must remain eternally transcendent above, outside of and unaffected by the modifications or transformations or productions of the material cause of the universe, whatever the material cause may be, whether material atoms or *mahá-bhutas* or unconscious Energy (*prakriti*). God as the omnipotent and omniscient Efficient cause must somehow exercise His influence upon the Material Cause and direct the course of its causal activity from above or outside and cannot identify Himself either with the Primordial Material Cause or with any of the secondary material causes or with any of their products. His controlling power may be all-pervading, but His essential existence must be all-transcending. Now, all the

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material objects, all the living bodies, all the individual minds and egos, are the products of the Material cause,—they owe their origin to the modifications or transformations of the Material Cause or new effects produced from the Material Causes. How can any of these bodies,—any of these products of the Material Cause or Causes be consistently supposed to be a special incarnation of God Himself? How can God really appear as or identify Himself with any of these living individuals, whether human or animal? All individual living beings, however great and glorious from the worldly points of view, must be thought of as God's creations out of the material cause; but none of them can be recognised as God Himself or His special incarnation or self-manifestation in the world. No worldly being can be rightly conceived as Divine. An embodied living being of this world must necessarily be finite, subject to birth and death, and dependent upon worldly circumstances. However extraordinary a particular individual's wisdom and powers may appear to be in comparison with those of other individuals round about him, he can never be omnipotent and omniscient, he can never be reasonably conceived as identical with the Creator of the universe. There can be no rational ground for believing that He who stands behind and rules over the ultimate Material Cause of this phenomenal world comes down to and lives and moves in this world with a finite body and a finite mind and becomes subject to birth, growth, disease, death, sorrow, etc. which we actually experience in the case of every human being.

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Thus I arrived at the conclusion that if God be conceived as purely the efficient cause of the world, the popular doctrine of Avatára cannot be consistent with this conception.

I reflected upon the second view. According to this view God is not merely the sole efficient cause, but also the sole material cause of this world of diversities,—He creates this world not out of any material or materials existing independently of Him, but out of Himself, by the mere exercise of His own creative Will. God alone exists by Himself; nothing else is self-existent, no matter, no force, no *Prakriti*. He is the Cause, Ground as well as the Substance of this world of conscious and unconscious beings. He alone is eternally self-existent, self-luminous, self-conscious and omnipotent. He, the one without a second, merely wished to be many and He became many, and thus the world of plurality came into existence. These diversities in time and space are His own self-manifestations. While these diversities continue to exist, He is the bond of union among them, He is their sole regulator and illuminer, He is the self and sustainer of them all. He is accordingly conceived as all-pervading, immanent in one and all, and hence as one and at the same time many. Nothing therefore has any essentially different existence from that of God. Everything exists in, by and for God.

This view has been developed and elaborated in various ways by different systems of philosophy. It has assumed the forms of the doctrines of Creation, Evolution, Emanation etc. Various attempts have been made

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to bridge over the gulf between the absolutely spiritual nature of God and the obviously material nature of the phenomenal world, between the unity of God and the diversity of the world, between the perfection of God and the imperfections of the world, between the eternity and infinity of God and the reign of temporal and spatial limitations in the world. Each system of philosophy has adduced logical arguments in support of its own interpretation of the nature of God, the nature of the world, the nature of the *Jeevas*, or individual spirits, and the nature of the essential relation between them. But all these schools have adhered to what they regard as the fundamental truth, viz., that God is the sole ultimate spiritual Reality and that He is both the efficient and material cause of the phenomenal world.

I thought over the arguments of each of these systems as far as my intellectual power allowed and examined if the *Avata'ra-Va'da*, as generally understood, could be rationally accepted in strict logical consistency with any of these systems. I failed to find out any logical basis of this *Avata'ra-Va'da*, which had been in my earlier days so very dear to my heart.

Whether God is conceived as having created the world of phenomenal beings out of Himself by the exercise of His absolutely free and self-conscious will, or the finite creatures are conceived as having emanated from or evolved out of Him without the necessity of any operation of His will, whether the power of creating or evolving the world is thought of as the essence

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of the Divine nature or as an attribute of God, as different from or non-different from or both different and non-different from or as neither different nor non-different from God, it is evident that God can never be wholly or perfectly manifested in any of His creations or self-manifestations, in any production of His Creative will or modification of His attribute or emanation from the eternal inexhaustible fountain of His perfect existence. In one sense every conscious subject as well as every unconscious object is a self-expression or self-modification of God and as such is essentially identical with Him. In this sense every such conscious or unconscious being may be called His *avata'ra* (literally, descent of God on the phenomenal plane). But in another sense, every creature of the phenomenal world whether human or sub-human,—however wise and powerful and full of splendour and beauty such a creature may be—is only one of the innumerable self-manifestations of God and must therefore be distinguished from Him. In this sense no creature of the world,—no phenomenal self-manifestation of God—has any right to be regarded as and worshipped as God Himself.

Thus Ram and Krishna, Buddha and Sankara, Jesus and Mahomet, Chaitanya and Ramkrishna, and such other historical or mythological personalities might have been possessed of extraordinary abilities and might have exercised great influence upon the thoughts, imaginations and actions of the people of their own times and even of the subsequent times. But still there was no reason to look upon them as God Incarnate,

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to place them on the throne of God, to imagine them as endowed with the powers of creation, regulation and destruction of the world and giving salvation to their worshippers. Each of these notable personalities had his special characteristics, and they differed from one another in their views about the Ultimate Reality and the Ultimate Ideal of the human life, in their modes of activity and spheres of influence, in the ranges of their intellectual powers and organising abilities. They had successes as well as failures in their lives. They were not without weaknesses and imperfections in their characters. Though they might be immensely superior to those round about them, none of them were without limitations. How and in what respects could they be regarded as essentially outside the circle of the human species and as identical with the Supreme Source of the phenomenal universe? Were the lions other than beasts, because they were immensely superior to the cats and dogs in strength and courage?

Exponents of *Avata'ra-Va'da* are found, strangely enough, to draw distinctions of *higher* and *lower*, *complete* and *partial*, *Sa'ttwika* and *Ra'jasa* and *Ta'masa*, and so on, among those whom they regard as *Avata'ras* or Incarnations of God, and the followers of different sectarian religions differ widely in their estimates of the *Avata'ras*. One who is worshipped as the most perfect Incarnation of God by one sect is assigned a lower place by another sect, and a different *Avata'ra* is given the place of honour. Thus the worshippers of the *Avata'ras* quarrel among themselves as to which

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of them is the highest *Avata'ra*, the most complete Incarnation of the Omnipotent and Omniscient Source and Substance of the uuiverse, and which of them are only parts of Him? It is obvious to any reasonable man that *Parts* of God (if God can have any such parts at all) can be regarded as non-different from Him in the sense that they have no existence apart from His existence,—that they live, move and have their being in Him. In this sense the highest and the lowest parts are equally non-different from Him. In this sense, every man, every creature, every phenomenon of the world can be regarded as non-different from Him and therefore as Divine Incarnation. On the other hand, the parts, as parts, can never be accepted as the whole, can never be put on the same honoured place as the whole. Accordingly, even the greatest and most perfect man of the world, even the highest self-manifestation of the Divine Will and Power in this created universe, cannot be accepted as God Himself, as the Creator of the universe aud the Supreme Object of worship. God, though manifesting Himself in diverse orders of conscious and unconscious existences (including the highest order of men), must always and necessarily transcend all His self-manifestations. Hence the greatest men of the world should be revered, and adored, not as God Incarnate, nor even as a Deity, but as *men* of a superior type, as human beings (of the same species with other human beings) with highly developed wisdom and power which other people also can aspire to attain. They should not be worshipped and prayed to for mercy and deliverance from the

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world, but they may be respected and thought of as setting up ideals which others may seek to realise.

It also struck me that this *Avata'ra-Va'da*, as ordinarily understood, was the source of much sectarian narrowness and bigotry and fanaticism in the field of religion. Though worshipping the same God, the same ultimate Cause of the world, the worshippers were divided into so many sectarian groups and warring camps, on account of their blind adherence to different *Avata'ras*,—different personalities considered as the highest Incarnation of God. If these *Avata'ras* that stood between the worshippers and the One God were disowned or were recognised as nothing but highly talented personalities all would be consciously devoted to the same Supreme Deity and there should be no ground for sectarian quarrels. Thus having shaken off my faith in *Avata'ra-Va'da* I practically got rid of all sectarian prejudice and narrowness.

It is sometimes argued by the advocates of *Avata'ra-Va'da* that as God is omnipotent, He should not be conceived as devoid of the power of assuming a human form or an animal form or any other finite form and of living and moving and acting in any part of His own world with such a form at His sweet pleasure. The limitations of such an assumed form being self-imposed and freely accepted are not inconsistent with His essential Godhead—with His limitless power and knowledge. While He descends into a finite body and dwells in a particular place and acts in a particular way, this does not mean that He is absent from the other places of the universe and deprives Himself of

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His all-pervading spiritual existence and all-governing, all-sustaining, all-transcending power and wisdom. Being omnipotent, He can remain infinite and become finite at the same time, He can regulate the cosmic order in accordance with His eternal plan and at the same time reveal Himself in one or many psycho-physical organisms and exhibit particular modes of life and action within this cosmic order, He can shine in His eternal spiritual glory above time and space and all the same appear in particular forms at particular times and places, and play various parts involving displays of joys and sorrows, successes and failures, friendships and enmities, etc. Thus according to them there is not only no inconsistency of *Avatara-Vada* with the infinity, eternity, omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, and the absolute Creatorship and Governorship of God, but rather it follows necessarily and logically from these Divine characteristics. The ardent votaries of *Avatara* go so far as to proclaim that the body of an *Avatara*, though appearing outwardly as a physical body, is not really so; it is really a spiritual body appearing in a physical form; though seemingly subject to the laws of birth and growth, health and disease, decay and death, it really transcends them; in the case of an *Avatara*, the soul as well as the body being spiritual, there is really no distinction between the soul and the body; the Divine body as well as the Divine Soul transcends all limitations, to which a mortal body or an individual soul is subject.

All such arguments could no longer bring any convication to my reason and restore my faith in

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Avata'ra–Va'da. First, if the omnipotence of God be resorted to as a reason for establishing *avata'rava'da* it may be pointed out that this omnipotence may also be adopted by the critics of this theory for proving that *avata'ra* is absolutely uunecessary for God for the accomplishment of any purpose in this world. It is admitted even by the advocates of *avata'rava'd* that God creates and governs all the phenomena of this universe by remaining formless and abovc time and space. If all this is possible for formless God, what necessity can there be for His appearing in any particular body at any particular time and in any particular portion of space in order to accomplish any particular purpose in this world? Hence omnipotence of formless God being recognised, *avata'ra* becomes altogether unnecessary. Moreover, I could not persuade myself to believe that omnipotence meant the power of doing the impossible, the capacity for accomplishing what is logically self-inconsistent. God, though omnipotent, cannot be conceived as having the power of killing Himself or of describing a circle with one straight line or of making a part greater than or equal to the whole or of making a thing finite and infinite at the same time. God being the most perfect rational being, whatever He does or can do must be rationally conceivable. It may be conceivable that God, the Supreme Spririt, above all limitations of time and space, perfectly self-conscious and free, does by the exercise of His omnipotent will create out of Himself diverse orders of finite and transitory existences, including the lifeless material things as well as the most highly gifted human beings. But

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it is inconceivable that He Himself becomes a finite embodied human being, in any sense other than that in which all His creations may be regarded as finite embodiments of Himself. He cannot be reasonably conceived as really infinite and eternal and really finite and mortal at the same time, really transcending the world-order and really passing through births and deaths in the world. What is called spiritual body is a self-contradictory conception. A being in whom there is no distinction between body and soul is really bodiless, formless Spirit.

I have shown how I failed to find out any support for *Avatara-Vada* consistently with the conception of God as the real cause of the phenomenal Universe. God, whether conceived as the purely efficient Cause of the world or as both efficient and material Cause, is generally thought of as a self-conscious and self-determined Personality. But I was at this time a votary of Impersonal Brahman, without any real power or attribute, without any creative will or self-diversifying tendency, without self-consciousness and self-determination (in the ordinary intelligible sense of the terms), above time, space, relativity and activity. Such *Nirguna* Brahman cannot be a real cause of the world of diversities, whether efficient or material. But He being the sole Reality, there cannot be any second self-existent Reality that can furnish an adequate causal explanation for the phenomenal universe of our actual experience. Brahman or Impersonal God is therefore conceived as the illusory Cause of the universe,—i. e. a self-luminous being who, without any will or self-modification on His

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part, without exercising any causal power or undergoing any kind of change *appears* as the universe of innumerable finite spirits and countless species of living and non-living beings. Just as in illusion a rope appears as a snake, an oyster appears as silver, without really becoming so, or as in dreams we experience numerous objects which do not really exist, so Brahman, by virtue of some *inexplicable* power, Maya, which is neither absolutely non-existent nor absolutely existent, appears as a plurality of objects without really becoming so. Thus whatever objects,—men or animals, living beings or lifeless material things,—we may experience, it is Brahman and nothing but Brahman that appears in the *names* and *forms* of these objects.

Now, according to this view, which alone was accepted by me as the most consistent philosophical view, every object of the world may in one sense be regarded as an *Avatára*, i. e. an illusory embodiment of Impersonal Brahman, a false appearance of Brahman under limitations of time and space and relativity. But no person, however extraordinarily wise and powerful and noble can be consistently thought of as perfectly identical with Impersonal Brahman Himself. Impersonal Brahman cannot really incarnate Himself as a living Personality in the world. Impersonal Brahman appears as Personal God illusorily through the operation of Máyá. The apparent relation between Brahman and Máyá being without beginning or end in time and being the source of the apparent cosmic process, Brahman as conditioned by Máyá is worshipped as Personal God by devotees in general. But a so-called Avatára's life has

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beginning and end in time and he is an individual among so many other individuals. Such an individual must be distinguished from Impersonal Brahman as well as from Personal God. If an individual, emancipated from the bondage of *Avidyá* and illumined with the intuitive knowledge of the ultimate non-difference of all from Brahman, be called an *Avatára*, every *Jivanmukta* would be so called. But the advocates of Avataravada do not regard every *Jivanmukta* as an *Avatára*. It is meaningless to say that Brahman Himself is born in the world, for birth in the world implies subjection to Máyá, and Brahman is eternally above Máyá. Hence *Avatáravádа* cannot be consistently maintained in accordance with the Vedantic theory. Thus my faith in this doctrine was completely shattered.

Some sections of Vedantists try to maintain *avatáravádа* on the supposition that the bodies of Jivas in general are *bhautika* (made up of physical elements) whereas the bodies of *avatáras* (Divine Incarnations) are Máyika. i. e. a body which appears to be physical without really being so. They also distinguish between *Jiva* and *avatára* on the supposed ground that the birth of a *Jiva* is determined by the Law of Karma, while the self-manifestation of God in the form of an Avatara is determined by His absolutely free will which is above the law of Karma. It is also assumed by them that every Jiva has to acquire knowledge and develop his power through systematic efforts, while an *avatára* appears in this world with Divine power and knowledge, though their expressions may be in different degrees. Now, all these are evidently undue assumptions. There

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is absolutely no rational ground for asserting that the bodies of Jivas and the so-called Avatáras are essentially different in their constituents. From the vedantic point of view, all bodies are ultimately Máyika, since the physical elements are the products of Máyá or Cosmic Ignorance, and as such they are regarded as appearing to be real entities though in truth they are only illusory appearances. On the other hand, if we take an empirical view, the bodies of the *avata'ras* are as much physical as those of other Jivas in as much as they are also subject to spatial and temporal conditions, subject to birth, growth, disease, decay and death, subject to all other limitations to which all other living bodies are subject. Therefore, the distinction between Bhautika and Máyika with reference to bodies is altogether unwarrantable.

The second distinction also is equally without any rational foundation. The Law of Karma is itself a theory which cannot be verified. We can never ascertain, even in the case of ordinary Jivas, what actions of their previous births are the determinants of their present birth or whether they had any previous births at all. What we actually experience is that different Jivas are born under different sets of conditions and with different sorts of capacities and intelligence. With regard to so-called *Avata'ras* also we experience the same thing. They are born under different sets of conditions and in their lives there are expressions of different kinds and degrees of capacities and intelligences. What is the ground for believing that their births, developments, enjoyments and sufferings (as recorded in the

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Puránas or the legendary tales about their lives) are not determined either by the law of Karma or by the physical and social circumstances like those of the Jivas in general? If the Law of Karma be assumed to be the governing principle for determining all the affairs of the world, then the births, deaths, activities, enjoyments, sufferings etc. of all living bodies in this world ought to be regarded as governed by the same principle. There is no ground for assuming some particular living beings to be exceptions to this Law on the strength of an unproved hypothesis that they are Divine Incarnations. Moreover, the records about the lives of these supposed Incarnations state here and there that the births of some of the Avatára Purushas under certain conditions and some of their activities and sufferings are the results of some of the misdeeds of their previous Incarnations, or the results of the curses of some powerful persons and so on. If any value is to be attached to these records, then it is evident that even the biographers of the Avatáras do not regard them as wholly above the Law of Karma. But it is obvious that Divinity and subjection to the Law of Karma cannot go together. Hence the Avatárahood of particular persons on the ground of their being above the Law of Karma is found to be without any rational foundation.

Thirdly, the stories about the lives of the *Avataras* (whatever may be their historical value), bear evidence to the fact that knowledge and powers of these persons also developed in accordance with the general rules applicable to human beings in general, that they also

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had to acquire knowledge from teachers and books, that their power also were limited in various respects. There are found records of intellectual prodigies or extraordinary geniuses that exhibit exceptional developments of knowledge from their early childhood, but these are not accepted as invariably grounds of their Divinity even by the advocates of the Avatára theory. Hence there is no means to ascertain that the so-called *avatáras* are born with perfect knowledge or unlimited powers. Thus we find that from empirical point of view there is no ground on which the avatára-theory can be established. The metaphysical weakness of the theory has already been pointed out from different standpoints.

As a matter of fact, the avatára theory has nowhere been established as a valid conclusion of any logical or philosophical reasoning. It has all along been maintained by the different schools of devotees in accordance with their own ways of thinking as an article of faith. All of them first assume *avatárvád* as their unquestionable faith and then tried to incorporate it with their respective systems of philosophy. They never questioned the possibility of any human being or any other creature being rationally conceived as God incarnate; but they supposed some such persons or creatures as incarnations of God and then in order to silence their questioning mind, they advanced some plausible arguments for sustaining their beliefs. All their arguments take Avatára for granted,—their blind faith becomes the basis of their apparently logical arguments. They accept some particular beings as God incarnate and then, when it is pointed out that they also are

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found subject to births and deaths, development and decay, disease and suffering, joy and sorrow, victory and defeat, etc. they appeal to their pet idea of *lila'* (the sportive self-expressions of the Divine). They dogmatically assert that as God with His absolute freedom and perfect character playfully manifests Himself as an apparently finite being in His own world, so He playfully makes an exhibition of growth and decay, joy and sorrow, gain and loss, disease and death etc., though inwardly He is not at all affected by these outer playful expressions of Himself. To a rational critic this is putting the cart before the horse. How can we know that all these are His playful self-expressions and that He is inwardly not at all affected by them? When we actually find in the records that the well-laid plans and designs of the recognised Avatáras are sadly frustrated, when we find that they bitterly lament their frustrations and bereavements, when we find that they seriously deal with certain sections of people as friends and some other as enemies, how can we in view of these circumstances maintain that these are nothing but the Divine sports and that these *avata'ras* remain above them at heart? Then again, the conception of *lila'* is borrowed from the sports which are actually found to have a place in human life and even in animal life. These sports generally originate from the exuberance of energy in the nature of men and animals and sometimes their contrivances for enjoyments which are not generally available in the works of their normal life. But in all cases sports are resorted to for enjoyments and not suffering. But what we actually find in the

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lives of so-called Avatáras involves not only enjoyments, but various kinds of sufferings as well. How can these sufferings be consistently associated with Divine life, how can they be regarded as freely and voluntarily chosen by the most perfect Being? Hence the conception of *lila* also cannot be accepted as a support strong enough to be relied upon for explaining the phenomena of the lives supposed to be Divine by the devotees.

With special reference to the advocates of Non-dualism it has to be said in this connection that if Brahman is conceived as so endowed with free will, a sportive spirit and an inscrutable power, so as to be naturally manifesting Himself of his own accord in such various forms, what necessity is there for conceiving Brahman as ultimately Nirguna? *Lila'va'da* is obviously incompatible with Nirguna-váda. If *lila'va'da* be accepted, all creation, all the appearances of plurality, can be explained in terms of the free voluntary sportive self-expression of Brahman and what is called Máyá can be conceived as the eternal inscrutable power of Brahman, essentially associated with His nature. In that case it is Saguna Brahman which is practically accepted and the supposed difference between Brahman and Máyá would be merely an abstraction. It is argued by some Vedántists that though Nirguna Brahman, by Itself, does not and cannot descend into the world as avatára, there is no inconsistency in holding that Brahman, as illusorily conditioned by Máyá or Cosmic Ignorance, can and does appear in particular avatára-forms. But this argument also cannot establish avatáraváda consistently with Nirgunavád. All the living and non-living

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forms of this world are, according to Non-dualistic Nirguna-váda, products of the modification of Máyá or Cosmic Ignorance and Brahman as the substratum of Máyá may be said to be immanent in or reflected upon everyone of them. This being the case, if Avatára is taken as meaning the immanence of Brahman in particular forms, then every object of this world, whether living and non-living, can be spoken of as the avatára of Brahman. But this is evidently not what the advocates of Avatáravád mean. They single out particular individuals and speak of them as Avatára. But in this sense *Avatáravád* can in no way be maintained consistently with Nirgunavád.

In order to draw a line of demarcation between Jivas in general and the so-called Divine Incarnations, some religious persons philosophically belonging to non-dualistic school maintain that the Jiva-bodies are made by Máyá through its transformation into physical materials, while the Avatara-bodies are manifestations of Máyá itself without such transformation, so that in the latter case the identity between Brahman assuming such bodies and Brahman as conditioned by Máyá remains unveiled, while in the former case this identity is wholly veiled. The illogicality of this position has already been pointed out. It may be further said in this connection that if God (i. e. Brahman as apparently conditioned by Máyá) can be supposed to assume a human or animal form without any veil upon His Godhood by virtue of the inscrutable power of His Máyá, then Máyá, instead of being of the nature of inexplicable positive Ignorance veiling the nature of

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Brahman and making It illusorily appear as a plurality of beings, becomes of the nature of a real wonder-working miraculous Power of God, which is assumed by the theistic schools in general, but unacceptable to non-dualistic Vedantin. If Brahman or God is supposed to be endowed with the Power of assuming diverse finite forms of Avata'ras without His Godhood being in any-way affected, He can be supposed to assume or create the innumerable finite forms of Jivas by the exercise of the same Power. If this could be logically maintained, there would be no necessity for assuming the inexplicable Cosmic Ignorance and admitting the Nirguna character of Brahman. Thus I found that Avata'rava'd can in no way be reconciled with the true non-dualistic position.

Thus all arguments in favour of Avata'rava'da whether from the standpoint of Saguna Brahman or from that of Nirguna Brahman, appeared to me incapable of standing any logical scrutiny.

In short:—God may be conceived in four different ways, viz.—(1) God is only the transcendent efficient cause of the world, the material cause being either some self-existent Primordial Energy, called Prakriti, as some deistic systems hold, or a plurality of unoriginated and indestructible material atoms, as Nyaya, Vaisheshika and similar systems hold; (2) God (with *Prakriti* as His innate power) is both material as well as efficient cause, the world being a diversified transformation or modification of His own power and governed by His will; (3) God is neither the efficient cause nor the material cause of the cosmic order, but

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a transcendent self-luminous perfect onlooker, the cosmic order being the product of some self-modifying Energy, Prakriti, eternally and inseparably related to Him, and illumined by His consciousness; (4) God is a illusory material and efficient cause, Prakriti being Ma'ya' or some inscrutable illusory power which modifies itself as illusory world. Now in the first view, since God is always transcendent of the cosmic system, He cannot possibly appear in any worldly form, since His descent into this world or His self-identification with any material body or His acceptance of any modification or change upon Himself would as a matter of course be incompatible with His transcendent character and His nature would be subject to modification. Hence the doctrine of Avata'ra is inconsistent with this conception of God. In the second view, God being really the sole cause of everything in the cosmic system, everything must be conceived as equally made of the Divine essence or as an embodiment of God. In that case there is no meaning in asserting that a particular being or a particular person born at a particular time or place, possessing particular glorious attributes and moving in a particular way is God Himself descending into the world, while others are *jiva* or *jada* (living or non-living beings) different from and subordinate to Him. Special Avatara becomes meaningless from this point of view. In the third view, God being essentially indifferent to the world-system and all worldly forms being self-modifications of His Prakriti, it would be irrational to suppose that any particular human or sub-human form is a descent or self-modification or self-revelation of

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God Himself. God who is transcendent of the entire cosmic order cannot be rationally supposed to be immanent in any particular body. In the fourth view, God being eternally unmodifying as well as unqualified (not qualified as in the third view), everything must be supposed to be modification of Ma'ya'; so no difference can be made between the so-called Avatár-body and Jiva-body. From the view-point of effect every body may be said to be *bhautika*—made of elements and from the view-point of cause every body may be said to be Máyic. So Avatarvada cannot hold its ground.

Thus as the result of the considerations from various stand-points I finally came to the conclusion that *Avata'rava'd* of whose validity I had so much unhesitating faith so many years has no rational basis at all, rather it is opposed to all theistic views (*A'stikava'd* including *Brahmava'd*). This forced me to hold the view that the preaching regarding *Avatara* is a piece of sectarian propaganda. This recognition resulted in the shaking off of my dogmatic sentiment and I valued it as the first fruit of Vedantic speculation. My long-cherished regard for *Avata'ra* took leave of me and I became a thorough-going non-dualist.

Now about the change in my psychological condition with regard to esoteric Sadhana. I could not practise uninterruptedly as I had done during the earlier period of my stay at Rikhikesh. Having got the taste of logical dissertation, I mixed with many intelligent Sadhus and held discourses with them. I received valuable information and suggestions from some of them. The practice

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of devotion and concentration was accordingly slackened by the enthusiasm for the acquisition of right knowledge. But still all my energy and effort were mainly devoted to the furtherance of the practice of meditation. Though I could not attain the serene calmness which I could during the previous period of my Sadhana at Rikhikesh still I went on keeping to Sadhana 15 or 16 hours daily. As a consequence of persistent and persevering Sadhana for these months I experienced that meditation had become more natural, consequently the moment I would leave aside talks I could instantaneously collect myself and enter into meditation quite easily.

Here I note the changes in my attitude towards the ideal of my Sadhana. I had the notion that the ideal of my Sadhana is God (as Saguna) and I shall realise this Truth through the practice of love and self-surrender to Him. Now I came to understand that my ideal is not something already unattained (as God is supposed to be) which can be realisable through such Sadhana as love or self-surrender, but my ideal is God (as Nirguna) which as witness-consciousness is always attained, since it is the very nature of every being (with regard to such inactive witness consciousness love or self-surrender is meaningless). We as individual beings or *jivas* are the result of the combination (illusory) of two entities viz. subject and object, and within the category of object there are three bodies viz. gross (physical body), subtle (senses, mind and understanding) and causal (ignorance—in dreamless sleep there is individuated ignorance which becomes

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remembered during waking in the form " I did not know anything" and in this positive ignorance all our desires and passions remain latent or in seed-form) and within the category of subject there is the unvarying witness consciousness beyond all states as well as the categories belonging to those states. This witness-consciousness is not essentially conditioned though appearing (illusorily) as particularised by the three bodies. So our Sadhana should be devoted to the realisation of the truth that Truth is consciousness unconditioned and to intellectually know that we are unaffected by all sorrows, defects and imperfections resulting from the illusory identification with conditions like body, mind and conditioned ignorance. In order to attain realisation it is necessary to destroy the root Ignorance veiling the unconditionedness of the consciousness though manifested as witness. Hence our Sadhana must proceed not merely through the attempt at working the mind temporarily devoid of all contents, but through the destruction of *Root – Ignorance*,—Ignorance which was the root of all plurality, the root of the sense of the finite ego and the sense of the difference between the self and the not-self, between the individual self and the Universal Self, and between the apparently diverse objects of experience, and as such which was the source of all bondage and sorrow. Unless and until this Ignorance was destroyed by the realisation of the Absolute Truth, by the fully conscious experience of the identity of the self and Brahman and the perfect unity of the Absolute Spirit, the source of bondage and sorrow could not be destroyed and permanent bliss

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could not be attained. I felt that *Vichara* and *Samadhi*—contemplative reflection as well as deep meditation—must be practised together for the destruction of Ignorance and the attainment of perfect peace and tranquillity. I went on with both these aspects of Sadhana. The result of my Sadhana encouraged me. But I experienced how difficult it was to intoxicate the whole of my being with the idea of the Absolute Truth. Whenever there was long interruption in my practice, I felt to have lost the ground and fresh struggle was necessary to recover the lost ground.

As a result of initiation into the Vedantic mode of thought and my conversations on various topics with Mangalnathjee and other up-country *Sadhus*, a change came about not only with regard to my conception of God, the validity of Avatarvad and the highest ideal of my *sadhana*, but also with regard to my conception of Guru and my relation to him. I had been adoring my Guru as the very embodiment of Divinity and the sole Master of my life and destiny. I had wholly surrendered myself to his feet. But now such questions arose in my mind?—Well, what have I seen in my Guru that I adore him as God? Have I found in him anything more than human qualities? There were occasions when I noticed in him some such human weaknesses as disgust and fear. Are these attitudes consistent with Divinity,—with omnipotence and omniscience which are the characteristics of God? He may be a man of saintly character, he may be a great Yogi, though I have never experienced in him any extraordinary occult powers. He behaves with men just as

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any other good and noble gentleman with imperfect knowledge and power does. There is no doubt that I have deeply felt his kindness and affection and that I am greatly indebted to him for his leading me to the path of renunciation and spirituality. But was there any valid ground for my attributing Divinity to him and for my putting him in the place of God and making him the object of my meditation? It is true that I have found in him a saint with perfect honesty and sincerity, with a perfectly good and loving nature, with an extra-ordinarily kind and generous heart, with a thoroughly dispassionate and peaceful mind, with absolute control over his temper and desires and passions, and with a profoundly calm and tranquil and God-centred consciousness. But all these qualities must have been attained by him through long and continued struggle, and they have now become almost natural with him as the result of sustained and systematic efforts. It may be that the building up of such a character is rarely to be found elsewhere. It may even be assumed that he has reached the highest state of spiritual development. But that does not mean that he is identical with God or that he is God Himself in human form. God has not to attain perfection through struggle, because He is by nature eternally perfect, and no man can by dint of any efforts become as perfect as God is perfect. Hence no rational being can regard a man as God. It may be said that the human Guru may be accepted as the *Pratika* or representative or at least as the living symbol of God. But this also does not appeal to me. It means the acceptance of a

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false idea as true for the purpose of the convenience of spiritual practice. This would imply insincerity of heart and a sort of double dealing. How can Truth be realised through the voluntary entertainment of such insincerity and the cultivation of a false idea? Had I not given up the worship of Images as symbols of God for the same reason? Suppose a married girl is asked to accept a stick as her husband's symbol (*Pratika*) and bestow her love and worship on it. Can she sincerely do it? Certainly she cannot. Why not? Because there is not a shadow of similarity between the two; there is, on the contrary, a world of dissimilarity. The same is the case with the idol. The idol-worship is not meant to create in us a belief in the existence of God, but the reverse is the case. We first believe that there is God and then we are asked to superimpose the attributes of God upon the idol. But when we actually find that the Divine qualities such as, all-pervasiveness, omnipotence, omniscience, eternity etc., cannot be met with in the idol, rather its opposite qualities are directly perceived, how can we as rational beings think of the idol as God and worship it as such? Similar arguments are applicable to the case of Guru also. Thoughts like these shook my long-cherished faith in Gurujee's God-hood. There was a radical change in my outlook. I could never continue a form of practice which my reason rejected. I gave up contemplation (*dhya'na*) on the form of Gurujee, the conception of the identity of Guru and God, and the habit of looking upon everything as Gurujee's grace. My deep reverence and attraction for the character and personality of Gurujee was

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not however affected by this change, and my relation with him also as that of a truth-seeking disciple with his truth-seeing *A'cha'rya* or preceptor remained unaltered.

My acceptance of the Vedantic conclusions as interpreted by Mangalnathjee brought about another radical change also in the mode of my spiritual self-discipline. I had so long been pursing the path of *Bhakti*. Now doubts began to assail my single-minded faith,— "What am I doing? Truth is non-dual, while I am practising *Sa'dhana'* (Japa) in accordance with the dualistic conception! I want Truth-realisation, but I have based my Sadhana on untruth! Can Truth ever be attained through the practice of untruth? Can untruth beget Truth? Of course not. Hence I must abandon or break away from this path and direct my energy towards the cultivation of the non-dualistic Truth. But I have not yet obtained any clear instruction on this issue from my Gurujee. Should I break away from the old and well-tried moorings and launch into unchartered seas without his express will and guidance? I could not make up my mind. I was in a fix. I could not sincerely and earnestly continue in the old path, nor abandon it for a new one without his sanction. Nor was it possible for me to leave Rishikesh and go to Gorakhpur for his advice at that time, for I had been ordered by him not to leave Rishikesh before the expiry of twelve months. What should I do now? These thoughts disturbed my practice time and again. "Should I continue my practice, knowing it to be a pursuit of untruth? Or should I abandon the practice and thereby violate

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Guruji's command ? " This cruel dilemma robbed me of mental poise and balance which had been mine for months; I was in between two fires which very nearly singed me and I burst into tears occasionally, not knowing how to reconcile a pair of irreconcilables. The canker of uncertainty fairly ate my heart out. Ultimately I took my counsel with myself and wrote Babaji a letter (my first letter after nine months) at Gorakhpur. To this he replied, " Go up to the Himalayas, when the term of one year at Rishikesh is over and after about a year in the Himalayas, come down and meet me at Hardwar during Kumbha Melá". On receipt of this letter I dismissed the indecision and made up my mind. " Let me not change the trend of my *Sadhana* without Gurujee's express order;" I told myself " though my present *Sadhana* does not seem to accord with my conception of Truth, it will at least help concentration, and when the power of concentration ripes, every thing will be plain-sailing and I will take long strides along the path of *Jnana*." So thinking I went on with the same practice. The last three months at Rishikesh were uneventful; I have nothing new to add to my usual programme of *Sadhana* which I continued for 15 or 16 hours daily. Now and then I came in contact with a number of *Sadhus*, other than those mentioned, and was much benefitted by their company and teaching. I do not, however, propose to discuss them here for space will hardly allow it.

During the last twelve days of the year of my stay at Rishikesh, I had to face some trouble. Receiving some report from the Dacca-Police (who could not get

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any clue to my whereabouts for one year), the Rishikesh C. I. D. were on a look-out for me received information from fellow-Sadhus and left my cottage. Every hour saw me in a new cottage and I never passed two consecutive nights under the same roof. Thus just to carry out the order of Gurujee, or rather to satisfy myself that I carried out his order fully, I faced some trouble for 12 days. On the 18th June, 1914,—the day of the completion of the year of my stay at Rikhikesh—I left for the Himalayas.

Let me make here a brief reference to the experiences I got at Rikhikesh about the Sadhus. As through the generosity of rich house-holders there exists a number of charitable institutions, in the forms of *Chhetras*, *Dharamsa'la's* etc. where food is freely distributed among the *Sadhus* for giving them every facility to devote themselves exclusively to spiritual self-discipline without any cares and anxieties about their physical needs, several hundred *Sadhus*, especially those with *Gerua* (orange-coloured cloth) on (with a small number of Nágás or Vaisnavas) are found to reside there almost throughout the year. Individuals come and go, but the number scarcely diminishes. They generally take their refuge in the small huts in different parts of the locality. It may be called a town of *Sadhus*, for they are the chief inhabitants there and the other factors of the town have grown up round about them. Many pilgrims also,—male as well as female,—visit this holy place in different seasons of the year, and they find temporary shelter in the *Dharamsha'la's*. They make contributions to the charitable institutions. Those who are comparatively

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rich give special *Bha'nda'ra's* (feasts) to the *Sadhus*. It becomes a sight to see when hundreds of people with orange-coloured loin-cloths assemble together to enjoy the feast. It is painful to observe that the majority of the *Sadhus* do not avail themselves of the opportunities offered to them by public charities in devoting their time and energy to spiritual practices. Many of them idle away their time. They neither study nor practise *Sadhana*. They do not take life seriously. They have no ambition, either secular or spiritual. They are satisfied with living on charity and have no sense of responsibility. They appear to be wholly unconscious of the noble ideal, which lies at the basis of such charities. They never feel that they are under obligation to make spiritual and cultural contribution to the society in return for the services which the society renders to them freely in the shape of food, clothing, shelter etc. They spend their time in gossip, in quarrel, in finding fault with one another, in eulogising the rich feast-givers, etc.

There are, however, some who are sincere and earnest *Sadhus*. Some of them take to the study of Vedanta, but the majority of these are contented with learning only formulas and slogans. Very few have got any eagerness to understand and penetrate into the spirit of Vedanta. Fewer still are actuated by any aspiration for practising Vedanta in life. Erudite scholars are not necessarily or even generally sincere seekers of Truth. It is not unoften found that persons who have an intellectual grasp of the non-duality of Brahman, the identity of the individual self with the self of the universe and the illusoriness of the objective world are

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not only themselves contented with this book-knowledge, but are foolish enough to stigmatize as ignorant those who are devoted to meditation and are earnest about the realisation of Truth. On the other hand, many sincere spiritual aspirants are indifferent to scriptural knowledge and rational comprehension of Truth, being contented with blindly pursuing the path they have adopted. Sectarianism, arrogance, narrow-mindedness, supersitition are found prevalent in all the communities of *Sadhus*, whether belonging to the *Bhakti* schools or the *Jnana* schools, whether practising devotion to particular Deities or proclaiming the non-duality of *Atman*. Those who practise devotion or meditation, but do not try to enlighten their understanding by means of rational search of Truth, cannot shake off their sectarian dogmatism and cannot therefore ascend to higher planes of spiritual knowledge and attain a liberality of outlook. While those who are learned scholars, but do not practise meditation and self-control, cannot get rid of the unsteadiness of their mind and the passions which are inherent in their physical and sensuous nature and cannot therefore establish themselves in higher planes of spiritual consciousness. They cannot rise above the domain of words.'

Their knowledge gives them arrogance, but not Truth. Among the enlightened Sadhus, many have attachment to name and fame. The spirit of service is almost nil among Sadhus. The spirit of *Vairagya* (indifference) with which a *Sadhu* leaves home, is not unoften damped in course of his living in such environments. In the cases of many their world-renunciation

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consists only in keeping away from their blood-relations and in refraining from making efforts to earn their own livelihood. Physical wants and mental desires, which cannot be satisfied in such a life, have also a depressing influence upon the spirit. I have come across some Sadhus who after living the so-called Sadhu-life for many years have frankly expressed their desire to return home, and live a normal household life. From my experience of the *Sadhus* as well as my personal experience of the difficulties inevitable in living the life of a true *Sadhu*, I fully realised why people were forbidden to renounce the world without acquiring fitness for it.

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CHAPTER X

About An Year in The Himalayas
(Badrinath Side)

Mangalnáthjee had informed me about a very lonely place, called Kalpeshwar, about 25 miles from Badrináth and far away from the main road to Badrinath. I arrived there in about 15 days. I experienced much trouble on the way, specially in the matter of begging food. On one occasion I got a small quantity of flour from the way-side *Chetra*. A beggar (professional) saw this and begged for a share. I gave him a portion of what I had, but he asked for more. Since my youth I had formed the habit of giving away to beggars whatever was within my capacity. So I gave the poor man all I had. But I myself could not go without food. Consequently I had to approach as a beggar some other pilgrims nearby. On many occasions my charitable propensity put me to such troubles and sometimes to privations.

Once while I was staying at a Dharamshálá, I found two beautiful young Bengali ladies, who appeared to be sisters, going on pilgrimage to Badrinath without any escort, male or female. Some *Gunda's* (ruffians) pursued them and wanted to form intimacy with them. They tried to induce them to join their company and accept their services. The ladies saw through the game, understood their immoral intentions and boldly refused to comply with their requests. They wanted to avoid them, but found themselves helpless. When I observed

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this affair from a distance, I hurried to the spot, took a very bold stand against the ruffians, sternly rebuked them for their conduct and prepared myself to give them a good fight. At this they got terrified and left the place. I remember to have met these two young sisters once again on the way, when I was exhausted through long walk and want of food. Unasked they came forward to prepare food for me and gave expression to their sense of gratitude for my helping them out of the hands of the *Gundas*. However, after experiencing a good deal of trouble in begging food as well as walking a long way during the rains, one afternoon I reached the hospital at Srinagar with wet clothes on. There I met a Bengali Assistant Surgeon (Dr. Ságar Prasa'd Neogi) whose hospitality I enjoyed for a few days and who afterwards became my brother-disciple. A day before reaching Kalpeshwar from Khammer Chatti I lost my way. I took a side-track leading to a dense forest, where I became terrified and desperate and moved on very fast. I tumbled down from heights, bruised and bleeding all over. At last despairing of finding my way out, I passed the night on a huge slanting stone, almost sleepless for fear of wild animals. I retraced my steps at daybreak and discovered the right path to the village.

At a distance of one mile from the village Kalpeshwar, in a very solitary funeral place, just below the hill where the Kalpeshwar Siva temple is situated, lived a Brahmacha'ri who was known to Mangalnathjee. I met Brahmacharijee and said, "I heard about this place from Mangalnathjee, I want to live in this nice

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place for solitary *Sadhana*, will you please arrange for my food ? I cannot cook myself ". He replied " I am ready to cook your food, on condition that you will procure flour and other raw materials necessary for yourself by begging from the village ". I agreed. I used to go to the neighbouring village every fourth day and get flour, oil and some vegetables by begging. The water of Kalpeshwar was remarkable for its rich digestive and appetising properties. We used to take three or four meals a day and these were consumed in an incredibly short time. A glass of sparkling water after a heavy meal and to our amazement we felt as if the stomach was empty and we had taken nothing. I passed two months in that lonely place. Here I was out of touch with books and philosophical discourses and went on with my Sadhana without any interruption. I had a peculiar experience here. I would hear a very sweet and pleasant musical sound, which might be compared to the combination of the sounds of a flute and other musical instruments. I ascribed it to the extraordinary character of that lonely place. The sound was a great help in my practice of concentration. I could not however proceed with the practice of *Ajapa'*, because breath-sounds could not be heard. I may mention in passing, an interesting incident which happened there. When the villagers came to know that Babajee (myself) was conversant with English, they began to devise means for keeping me there permanently and teaching English to their boys. The headman of the village approached me with an offer of marriage to a beautiful girl and some lands. I replied by only smiling at the offer.

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Having stayed for two months in that lonely place, I came down without visiting *Badrina'th*, which was at a distance of only twenty five miles from it. The pious Hindu readers may be astonished at my conduct. Badrina'th and Kedarnath are two of the most sacred shrines of the Hindus. Every year householders as well as *Sanny'sins*, belonging to all the sects of the Hindus and all the provinces of India, pay homage to them in large numbers and bear all the troubles and hardships of a most difficult journey on foot. They remain unapproachable in winter, being covered with snow. They are visited only during the few months of summer. I had a golden opportunity to acquire religious merits by offering worship to Lords Vishnu and Shiva in those holy places. But I voluntarily deprived myself of these merits Perhaps as a religious aspirant I owe an explanation to my gentle readers for not availing myself of this opportunity.

I may remind the readers that from *Kaila's* and *Mans Sa'rover* in the north to *Ra'meshwaram* in the south and from *Prava's Pattan* in the west to *Adina'th* (opposite Cox Bazar) in the East I visited most of the places of pilgrimage in India, some of them before this occasion and many afterwards. In my earlier life I had been a staunch believer in the special holiness of these places and in the spiritual benefits that might be gained from offering worship to the Divine Lord in those sacred places. Like other pious Hindus I used to believe that there were special manifestations of the Divine in those *Tirthas* and that their atmosphere was surcharged with spirituality. The images of God,—whether in the forms

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of *S'a'lagra'ms* or *Lingas* or in the forms of male or female Deities with various colours and shapes and sizes, whether produced in particular places through conjunctions of natural circumstances or produced artificially by human hands for giving expressions to the imaginations of the human minds,—I used in the early years of my religious life to believe as the special living embodiments of the Lord of the universe. In the presence of these supposedly holy idols, I used to feel that I was in the presence of the Supreme Being. With sincere devotion I would prostrate myself before them. But with my initiation into the Vedantic mode of Sadhana, I lost that blind faith. My mind became possessed with the logic of Veda'nta. I began to sharply discriminate between the assumptions of faith and the truths of reason, between the products of imagination and the actual realities of experience, between what was irrationally believed to be true by simple-minded piety-seeking men and women and what was logically established as true by thoughtful and erudite truth-seekers. There was a strong reaction against my previous beliefs. There was a revolt in my newly awakened intellect against popular traditions in general.

When with my new outlook,—which I in my new ardour for formal logic believed to be the enlightened outlook,—I reviewed the actual experiences of my past pilgrimages and the positive results of my adorations to the holy shrines and my baths in the holy waters of the sacred rivers and lakes and fountains, I was convinced that they were of very little help to me in the path of my spiritual advancement. The images or idols,

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natural or artificial, never responded to my prayer or accepted my offerings. I actually found in them nothing but pieces of stone or earth or wood or snow, as they really were. I never experienced any sign of life or consciousness or spirit in any of them. I wondered how I could have looked upon them as embodied Deities, how I could have worshipped them and sought for their mercy, how I could have imagined that the infinite eternal omnipotent and omniscient Spirit could have resided in these petty material bodies. People ascribed to them various moral and spiritual virtues, various intellectual and physical powers, various specific acts of love and mercy to the devotees, various splendid and glorious and beautiful characteristics, and justified their beliefs by quotations from their sectarian scriptures. I also had unquestioningly accepted the traditional beliefs of these people and with sincere earnestness attempted to see and feel what I had blindly believed in. But in every *Tirtha*, in every temple, in every idol, however glorified by the people, I saw the material things with their physical attributes, and nowhere did I experience the moral, spiritual and intellectual divine attributes which were ascribed to them except by the exercise of constructive imagination. At first like many other pious people I used to think that it was due to my own spiritual deficiency that I could not be blessed with the direct experience of the Divinity of the idols. But with the new light of rational discrimination my idea was changed. I was convinced that the attribution of Divinity to certain material objects, natural or artificial, by a number of people, did not really make them Divine, that

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whatever qualities and powers might be imagined in them, they really remained what they were, i. e. material things. Thus I lost my faith in the spiritual value of worshipping God in diverse idolatrous forms and in the spiritual glories of the *Tirthas* associated with such forms.

Not only did my actual experiences belie the popular beliefs, in which I myself had participated in the earlier stages of my *Sadhana*, but the principles of Formal Logic which now took possession of my active intellectual power rooted out the basis of those beliefs from my mind by showing their impossibility. According to the all-governing principle of Contradiction, Spirit could never *really* transform itself into matter, the infinite and Eternal could never *really* appear in finite and transitory forms, the Absolute One could never *really* become relative many, the transcendent Consciousness could never *really* be immanent in the plurality of unconscious material objects.

As under the influence of the Vedantic logicians I was fully convinced of the infallibility of this principle, not only in the domain of the objective world of phenomenal experience, but also in the realm of the transcendent Spirit, I was necessarily led to the conclusion that *Brahman* or *Atman* is one attributeless powerless differenceless actionless timeless and spaceless self-luminous Spirit, having no real relation with the phenomenal world, having no real manifestation in the forms of plurality, having no real causal connexion with the temporal and spatial existences, and that this

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Brahman or *Atman* being the sole self-existent Reality, this pluralistic world in time and space must be regarded as unreal, illusory, falsely appearing to the unenlightened finite minds as having a real existence. As however I could not in the normal states of my finite consciousness get rid of phenomenal experience, matter appeared as purely material, the diversities appeared as purely diverse, the finite and transitory objects appeared as purely finite and transitory to my eyes, and in my practical life I looked upon and dealt with them purely as such and nothing more. There is nothing spiritual in the material objects of normal experience, just as there is nothing material pertaining to the Absolute Spirit, which was the ultimate object of my religious pursuit. There is no God in relatien to the world, and there is no world in relation to God. From the phenomenal view-point the illusory world alone exists without any real spiritual basis and without any real spiritual bond of union among its diversities. From the spiritual view-point Brahman alone exists, without any world, without any creative and governing activity, without any self-manifestation, and without even any self-consciousness. This is the rational position to which the application of the supreme principle of abstract logic led me.

Thus I became a thorough-going spiritualist and a thorough-going materialist at the same time. In the fields of my spiritual endeavours and intellectual discourses I was a perfect spiritualist, in as much as nothing but the one changeless attributeless differenceless pure Spirit was really existent for me and my sole aim

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was the direct experience of this Absolute Truth. In the fields of my normal experience and practical behaviour I was converted into a confirmed materialst, in as much as matter was nothing but matter to me, I found no spirit embodied in any material body, I could not look upon any ideal with any material body, natural or artificial, great or small, from the spiritual point of view. The spiritual significance of the material world was lost for me. As a Vedantic logician with practical needs, I lived, so to say, in two distinct worlds,—one being perfectly spiritual and the other wholly material.

Human beings in general, being embodied in psycho-physical organisms, cannot in practical life ignore or deny the diversities of the phenomenal world, with which these organisms are essentially related, and also being endowed with spiritual cravings in their innermost souls, cannot remain satisfied with them. They have an inherent yearning for passing from plurality to unity, from the finite and transitory to the infinite and eternal, from the domain of unrest and suffering to the realm of peace and bliss, that is to say, from the materialistic world to the realisation of Spirit. But they cannot satisfy this inward yearning on account of the powerful attraction of the objects of their senses and minds, which drag them outward. Religious teachers have therefore invented and adopted various contrivances for satisfying their spiritual cravings within this world. They have sought to endow this material world with a spiritual significance. They have made various attempts to break down the barrier between spirit and matter, between the infinite and the finite, between

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the eternal and the temporal, between the absolute and the relative. They have taken the help of Philosophy and Art, Reasoning and Imagination, Logic and Aesthetics, for achieving this end. With the help of philosophical and logical reasoning, they have tried to convince themselves and the truth-seekers in general that One Absolute Spirit is the sole Ground and Cause and Substance of all the finite and transitory material objects of the universe, and have instructed the people to train their minds and senses to see this one infinite eternal Spirit behind and within the outer finite and transitory material forms of all the worldly objects. In order to progressively emancipate the minds and senses from their natural materialistic dispositions, they have singled out various particular phenomena of nature, which have a tendency to inspire the minds and senses with awe, wonder, admiration, reverence and other noble sentiments and have described them as special forms of self-manifestation of the Supreme Spirit, so as to specially attract the attention of the people to the Spirit behind the forms. Sometimes they have made artistic inventions and created images as the embodiments of the Spirit and taught the people to see the Spirit in the material forms. These are all contrivances for the spiritualisation of the outlook of men.

It is with this end in view that some forms of idolatory were introduced into every system of religion. Deification of particular persons, ascription of special sanctity to particular places, the celebration of particular religious rites and the holding of particular festivals in particular localities on particular occasions,—all

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these were meant for the achievement of the same purpose, viz., the progressive spiritualisation of the viewpoint of the religious aspirants. Hinduism, among all the religions of the world, has made an elaborate scheme for the realisation of this ideal. For this reason there are innumerable idols of multifarious forms which are deified and worshipped by the Hindus, there are numerous illustrious personalities adored by them as *avata'rs* or special incarnations of God, there are too many places,—cities, and villages, hills and forests, rivers and lakes, etc.—which are regarded as specially holy dwelling places of God and respectfully visited by them off and on.

All these may be supposed to be of some spiritual value for the sincere believers in the lower planes of religious consciousness. But after my initiation into Vedanta, my mind revolted against such popular beliefs. There were two special reasons for this psychological change in me. One was my *experience* and the other was my *logic*. I have already mentioned that I myself never experienced any special holiness in the *tirthas* I visited or any living spirit in the idols I worshipped. I cannot honestly assert that there was any positive perceptible elevation in my spiritual consciousness as the result of my visit to so many *tirthas* and *mandirs* or as the result of my bathing in so many holy rivers and lakes. In my earlier life I might have got some satisfaction of my religious vanity and might have imagined to have advanced some steps forward in the spiritual path as the result of such meritorious deeds. But when my rational faculty was developed, I discovered the baselessness

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of my imagination and satisfaction. My observation of the lives of other pious believers also contributed to my revolt. I found innumerable men and women going on pilgrimage to the holy places and worshipping the idols. But in none of them did I find any development of the spiritual outlook on the material world, in none of them did I observe a true sense of spiritual unity with all beings of the world awakened as the result of such pilgrimage and such worship, in none of them did I notice a real non-attachment to the outer material forms and attachment to the one non-dual Spirit in them. Most of the people, I observed, visited the *tirthas* and worshipped the supposed Deities, either for the gratification of their religious vanity or for the pleasure of witnessing extraordinary sceneries or for acquiring some religious merits in order to enjoy happiness in the other world or to gain some worldly ends in this life. Spiritual enlightenment was scarcely to be found even in the *Sa'dhu*–pilgrims.

In accordance with the logic which I accepted as the touch-stone of Truth, there could not be any real identification or even any real relation between Spirit and Matter. To me the spiritual view of the material world meant the denial of the real existence of this world. To look upon the material bodies as material and possessed of physical properties and at the same time to conceive them as real self-manifestations or self-modifications or embodiments of Spirit and as possessed of moral and spiritual properties was to me logically inconsistent and therefore meant the wilful embracing of falsehood. My mode of reasoning demanded that

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Kailásh and Badrináth and Kedarnáth, etc. should be looked upon as particular hills like the other hills, the Ganges and the Jamuná and the Narmadá, etc. should be looked upon as particular rivers like the other rivers, Benáres and Brindaban and Ajodhyá etc. should be looked upon as particular cities and towns like the others, and so on. They themselves could have no moral or spiritual qualities, no purifying or elevating influence, since they were nothing but material bodies. The moral and spiritual qualities and ideals could possibly belong only to the minds of rational beings like men. They could only falsely be imagined to be present in material objects. Such false imaginations might serve some useful purpose to lower orders of people. But men with logical minds could never sincerely cherish such ideas or beliefs. To them material bodies should be purely material from the phenomenal point of view, and from the absolute point of view they should be regarded as non-existent.

This being my view, the *tirthas* and the *idols* lost their special sanctity for me. Further, I was not at all interested in the acquisition of religious merits to be rewarded either in this world or in the other world. To adopt the artificial method of superimposing my idea of the Spirit upon specially selected material bodies and contemplating the Spirit in them appeared to me not only unnecessary, but also insincere. I was interested only in the realisation of Brahman in myself and I had already acquired the capacity for concentrating my attention upon the true conception of Brahman or A'tman.

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Accordingly I used to select only such places as were lonely and healthy and favourable for contemplation and meditation, whether or not they were regarded by the people at large as holy and purifying. On some occasions however I was actuated by curiosity and inquisitiveness to acquire first-hand experience of the important places of pilgrimage which were so highly spoken of by others. But I had no special attraction for them from the spiritual point of view. I had attraction for solitary caves and jungles and sea-shores and river-banks, which were favourable for meditation.

This was the mentality which lay behind my turning back from the proximity of Badrinath without paying due homage to it on that occasion, because I did not think it necessary or useful for my spiritual elevation. As a matter of fact, however, there are very few Hindu *tirthas* which I had not the chance of visiting, voluntarily or involuntarily, though without any faith in their extraordinary spiritual influence.

From Kalpeshwar I came down and settled at Káneri Village 4 miles from *Nand Prayá'ga*. There I lived in a small solitary room adjoining a Siva temple and used to go out once daily for day-time food to a house in the village not far from the temple. There I passed the whole day, sitting within the moist little room. After sunset I used to come out of the room and take food with the *Puja'ri*. For the first few days I had some conversation with him. Then I took the vow of silence, just to avoid the disturbance of useless talks with the Pujari. There one day I was sitting in the meditative mood when one person came; he sat and

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attentively watched me from a distance. He then began to shed tears, saying "I practised *yoga* on the bank of the Nerbudda for 12 years, and then I came to see Badrinath, wherefrom I went to the village A'dbadri; there I fell in love with a woman with whom I am now living and carrying on some business." However, after stopping at Kaneri for about three months I left it and arrived at Srinagar and spent four months there in a small cottage adjoining the famous Kamaleshwar Siva Temple. There also I had no books on philosophical controversies; and spent my days wholly in Sadhana. During these nine months' stay in the Himalayas I practised Sadhana regularly about 17 or 18 hours a day. I did not gain any new experience through this practice; only meditation and the enjoyment of void became more deep and lasting. I could with greater ease withdraw my attention from worldly objects and ideas and get it concentrated, and also I felt my super-worldly disposition growing in strength and duration. After ten months I came down to meet Babajee at Kumbha Melá, Hardwár, in April, 1915.

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CHAPTER XI

Back to Guruji.

Having returned to Hardwar from the Himalayas I eagerly waited for the arrival of Guruji with his party. I had to wait for about a fortnight before he reached. During this period I moved hither and thither in different parts of the Kumbha Melá (the largest Sadhu-congregation in India), in order to form first-hand acquaintance with the life and conduct of the various sects of Sadhus of the country. I mixed with various orders of notable Sadhus and watched their dealings. The ways in which the Sadhus in general passed their time even in such a big congregation attracted my notice. Unfortunately the impression which they produced upon my mind was not quite favourable and not at all inspiring and encouraging to a new recruit into the order like myself.

I found that ordinary *Sadhus* passed a good deal of their time in idle gossip about *Bha'nda'ra's* (feasts) they attended and the places they wandered about and that they cherished feelings of envy and hatred towards each other. Within the narrow circle of each sect there occurred quarrels for positions and advantages, and these sometimes developed into regular fights. On some occasions terrible sanguinary battles took place between different rival sects. Among the renowned *Sadhus* also very few were truly learned and earnestly devoted to spiritual culture. Like the householders their position and prestige also were determined by their property

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and wealth and grandeur and their capacities to give feasts to the *Sadhus* and the poor. Many *Sadhus* of shallow learning earned money by reading scriptures and expounding them lightly to ignorant people especially to the women-folk. Many places, which were advertised to be centres of *Satsang* or spiritual companionship, were little better than business-centres, in as much as most of those who assembled there were more concerned about money and pleasure than about Truth and spiritual progress. Most of the Sadhus were not really happy at heart and were liable to fall into the traps of women and go astray from the path of sanctity and honest citizenship. Very few had a feeling of compassion for the sorrows and troubles of others. Many of them were deprived of their lofty ideals and finer sentiments on account of the anti-social life they lived and the difficulties they experienced in getting their bread and shelter. Ideas of nationalism and patriotism were scarcely to be found among the *Sadhus*. Except a very few modern organisations, the *Sadhus* in general,—even those who were recognised heads of the big monasteries, who were *Mahants* or *Mandaleshwars* or who were reputed to be erudite scholars,—had no conception of making worthy contributions to the spiritual culture of the nation, not to speak of the Humanity. There was no earnest attempt on the part of any powerful individual or institution to make such a big assembly of care-free and hardship-proof *Sadhus* really fruitful from the point of view of national culture,—to accomplish the great purpose which might have been served by this august congregation, if efficiently organised and guided in the proper path.

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The homeless *Sadhus* are a force in the country, but most of them turn into aimless vagabonds, doing nothing systematically either for their own spiritual advancement or for the good of the society that feeds them. This is due to the absence of any organised attempt to utilise them and to educate them to become useful members of the society. The wealthy *Mohants* and *Mandaleshwars* are found to open *Chetras* and distribute food, only to gain easily name and fame among uncultured people. They spend so much, without having any idea of creating a permanent charity-fund for systematically and successfully fighting the poverty and illiteracy of the people, including the *Sadhus*. So poor is their education, so sectarian is their attitude, so individualistic is their outlook, so self-centred is their mentality, that they have no time or mind to think about any national advancement. Seeing the Kumbha Mela, I had nothing but a feeling of despair about the destiny of my country and countrymen.

However, I was not so much interested in mixing with and watching the manners of the Sadhus in general as in meeting my beloved Guruji after the lapse of about two years. On the day he arrived I received him at the Hardwar Station and escorted him to Náthjiki Dalichá (a monastary belonging to Náth-Yogi sect). Some of his lay disciples also accompanied him to Hardwar for visiting the Kumbha Mela. Henceforward I spent almost the whole time in the sweet and inspiring company of Guruji and in rendering services to him. I felt no curiosity to go out to see the manners, and movements of the Sadhus and pilgrims. I did not

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even care to witness the grand procession of the different orders of monks on the day of *Kumbha-Sna'na* (the bathing ceremony of the most important day of the occasion). Nor did I even myself take a bath in the Ganges. On that supposedly auspicious day my joy lay in enjoying the companionship of Babajee and looking to his physical comforts.

After Kumbha Mela I accompanied Babajee to Gorakhpur. One day I placed before him my puzzle, viz my conception of Reality as non-dual and my practice of Bhakti-Sadhana which involves duality. Hearing this he kept silent for a while in his characteristic way. Then he advised me to practise *Jnana-Sadhana* and give up *Bhakti-Sadhana* to which he had previously initiated me. He taught me a few formulas embodying the highest conclusion of non-dual Vedanta, and instructed me to devote myself to meditation on that line. He himself appeared to be unconcerned about and perhaps innocent of the logic of non-dualism, but as a practical Vedantist he seemed to have realised the Vedantic Truth by dint of systematic spiritual discipline and he instructed me to follow the same course.

The gist of the Vedantic doctrine he told me in four short sentences. (1) Without knowledge (realisation of Truth) there is no way to the attainment of *Mukti* (deliverance from Ignorance, bondage and sorrow). (2) The ego (*aham*) has no real existence (i. e. it has only an apparent reality due to Ignorance). (3) The world of changing plurality is like a dream and all the phenomena of the world are like visions in a dream. (4) *Parama'tma'* is the Truth of all i. e. the Truth or

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ultimately real essence of the Ego as well as of all phenomena of the world. He told me to concentrate my mind on it and try to realise this Truth. I was greatly satisfied. I regarded it as a fresh initiation into *Sa'dhana'* of a higher plane and devoted my whole energy to it. All my doubts were for the time being removed. The inconsistency which I had been feeling between my idea and practice disappeared. I whole-heartedly engaged myself in the new form of *Sa'dhana'* with the sole aim of realising the attributeless non-dual Brahman as my true Self and the Absolute Truth. I thought of the world with its plurality of living and non-living beings as utterly false and illusory. The idea of Personal God also was abandoned as false, because it involved reference to the world. The world being false, the creatorship and sustainership and regulatorship of Brahman also must be false, and hence Brahman could not in His real character be conceived as the Supreme Personal Being or God. Accordingly there was no meaning in praying to Him, in craving for His mercy, in cultivating a sense of dependence upon Him, in offering worship to Him, in cherishing love and reverence for Him. Having come to this logical conclusion from the non-dualistic conception of the Ultimate Reality, I not only gave up the utterance (*japa*) of the Divine Name, but also freed my mind from the inborn and long-cultivated reverential and prayerful attitude towards Him. Never since do I remember to have ever uttered the Name or invoked the mercy of God as a part of my *Sa'dhana'* or even as a means of getting rid of difficulties. There being, according to my

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conclusion, no God apart from the impersonal inactive Existence-Consciousness, how could He help me in difficulties or assist me in my spiritual progress ?

The fundamental points of difference between *Bhakti-Sadhana* and *Jnana-Sadhana*, as I understood them, may be noted here. In Bhakti I have (1) to embrace and sustain the idea of individuality of myself, (2) to think of myself as different from, though dependent upon God, (3) to take God as a Personal Being possessing supremely good and noble qualities, such as omniscience, omnipotence, mercy, love, justice, etc. (4) to look upon God as the highest object of my worship and myself as His humble worshipper, (5) to contemplate God as Father or Mother or Lord or Friend and (6) to culture the sentiments of awe, admiration, reverence, dependence, love etc. towards God. In *Jnana-Sadhana*, on the other hand, I have to make systematic attempts (1) to transcend the idea of individuality, (2) to forget myself as a distinct entity having existence distinguishable from the universal Existence-Consciousness, (3) to conceive the Reality as attributeless, differenceless, actionless, non-dual and self-luminous, (4) to discard the notion of worshipper and worshipped, (5) to concentrate the attention upon the identity of my true self with the Infinite Eternal Absolute Reality and (6) to merge my existence in that of Absolute Reality.

This time Babajee also asked me to study whenever I would find leisure such books as would be favourable for the growth and strengthening of the viewpoint I accepted. He himself arranged to bring for me by

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post from Poona one copy of the Gita with Sankara's commentary in Sanskrit. He had much love for the *Yogava'sista* and I used to read it to him every evening. He would listen to it with rapt attention and this would fill my heart with enthusiastic joy. Sometimes when I read any topic which perhaps he did not relish, he would suggest some other portion. This led me to believe that he must have studied or at least heard it previously.

During my sojourn at Gorakhpur on this occasion, some influential Sadhu belonging to the Nath sect approached Babaji and entreated him to get my ears bored and turn me into a *Ka'npha't* yogi in accordance with the long prevalent custom of the sect. Babaji replied, " He has adopted the Sadhu-life out of his intense yearning for spiritual realisation and not for acquiring the rights and privileges of a full-fledged yogi. He will practise Sadhana in solitude; what is the necessity of making him a *Kanphat* ? No sectarian sign will be of any use to him." I was deeply satisfied with this answer of Babaji. I had all along been against wearing any sectarian symbols. I of course put on the symbols of *Na'da* and *Shaili* at that time under the command of Guruji. But I had a strong abhorrence of the ear-splitting custom, which appeared and still appears to me as a most cruel barbarious and inhuman custom. Though Babaji had himself in his time submitted to this custom and carried the sectarian badges on his body to the last day of his life, he is not known to have ordered any of his disciples to submit to the cruel practice of ear-splitting. I thanked Babaji in my heart of hearts for not yielding to the importunities

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of the Sadhus and for allowing me the freedom of living the life of a non-sectarian Sadhu.

Having stayed for some time at Gorakhpur and enjoyed the sweet and inspiring companionship of Guruji, I made up my mind to retire to solitude and devote my whole time and energy to the practice of *Jnana-Yoga* as instructed by him. By introspection I found that having put up in the midst of various sorts of men at Hardwar and Gorakhpur and having attended to outer activities, the power of concentration which I had acquired through continuous efforts in this direction in the Himalayas was to some extent weakened. From the viewpoint of deep concentration, even my physical services to Babaji and enjoyment of his companionship, however delightful, appeared a hindrance to me. I therefore humbly sought Babaji's permission to leave the place and to retire to some solitary place. Babaji at first said,—"There are solitary quarters near about the A'shrama; may you not reside here and practise meditation in those places?" I replied,—"These environments are not favourable for deep meditation. I want to go back to the Himalayas. Kindly allow me to do so." He yielded to my prayer and gladly gave me permission to have my way.

From Gorakhpur I started for Uttarkáshi, 4 days journey from Mussorie by foot.

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CHAPTER XII

Five Months at UttarKa'shi

(Himalayas–Gangotri Side)

Uttara–Káshi is a small beautiful place within the Tehri State in the district of Garhwal (Himalaya). It is on the bank of the Ganges, about fifty miles south of Gangotri, the source of the Ganges. Its outer appearance bears some resemblance to Kashi (Benares), one of the oldest and most illustrious centres of Hindu culture, and perhaps it was on that ground that the name Uttara–Kashi (Northern Benares) was given to it. As in Benares, the Ganges has taken here a northern course and has immensely added to the beauty and sublimity of this small valley in the surrounding mountainous ranges. The Ganges water is of course much purer and sweeter and much more transparent and sparkling in this upper Kashi than in the lower and bigger Kashi. It cannot be definitely ascertained how long ago this place was chosen by world–renouncing Sadhus for living lonely lives and practising meditation. In course of time it has grown into small colony of Sadhus and some amenities of life have also been provided for them by pious moneyed people. Though its loneliness has been in a great measure diminished, still it is in many respects favourable for the practice of spiritual sadhana, particularly because the spiritual aspirants have not to suffer from fear of starvation. The climatic conditions of the locality are also conducive to health and strength, without which prolonged and strenuous sadhana is impossible. I had

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heard of the place previously and I went there with the definite purpose of devoting my whole time and energy to the practice of spiritual self-discipline in the vedantic line as just instructed by Guruji. Having reached there I selected some available solitary spot and engaged myself in the execution of my self-imposed task. I spared some time for holding conversations with some learned sadhus on religious and philosophical topics and the rest of the day and night I spent mostly in sadhana.

Now my process of practice was *Ajapa'* and Vedantic meditation. As the result of this dual practice continued for some time I found that my mind easily attained the state of deep silence, in which I could not hear even my breath-sounds. I then felt no necessity for continuing the practice of *Ajapa'* any more, but applied my whole energy to the practice of different processes of Vedantic meditation. Sometimes I used to project my thought in such a way that the notion of egohood was immensely expanded and become identified with Infinite Space. Sometimes I contemplated the existence of one Infinite Luminosity and lost myself in It. Sometimes I thought symbolically that I was, as it were, a salt-idol merging its individuality in the vast Infinite waveless ocean. Sometimes I used to think within myself that all the finite objects of the universe were non-existent or that they were mere appearances, the Substratum of which was Myself the Infinite. On occasions when a wave of restlessness overpowered my mind which I could not suppress by mere force of will, I would utter in an audible voice the long-sounding

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'Om' (not for Bhakti culture, but for concentration only). When the fickleness became less obdurate by the practice, I used to leave it and take up *Ajapa* practice (only watching the breath – sounds, without making any effort at cessation 'of breath – *kumbhak*) and when the mind became still more concentrated by this practice, I would give it up and devote myself to deeper forms of Vedantic meditation with a view to transcend my finite egohood and to identify myself with the Infinite Brahman. In course of my various experiments, I got the experience that without the help of Yogic methods it was very difficult to concentrate the mind upon Truth and attain calmness on the strength of mere Vichára or intellectual reflection.

At Uttarkashi I met Ramáshramjee, Prakásanandjee and Siyáramjee. The first two were Vedantists and the third was a Yogi. On many occasions I went to Ramasramjee, and listened to his discourses on Vedantic dialectics (*prakriya'*). In his burning passion to teach me, he poured out his very heart. He seemed all too eager to infuse every drop of his learning right into my veins ! I was charmed by his enthusiastic and fascinating dissertation and waited long hours to drink in the blessed words.

He was the most famous among all the Sadhus residing permánently at Uttarkashi. I heard reports that he was the Guru of the noted monk RámaTirth. I put to him—Is it a fact that RamTirtha accepted you as his Guru ? To this he replied—I do not make anyone my disciple. Tirathrám came to me and begged me for

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initiation. I refused. To this he himself cut a lock of his hair (a practice which is customarily performed by the Guru for the disciple) in my presence and thus became a Sannyasi without any other formal ceremony and named himself Rámtirtha.

Prakasanand Puruji was the most renowned scholar of Neo-Nyaya and Neo-Vedanta. He was a pupil of the great Maithili Pandit Báchha' Jha' and one of the few Sadhus who could expound Adwaita-Sidhi of Madhusudan Saraswati, one of the most difficult works on Neo-Vedanta. Many Vedantic problems which seemed knotty and difficult to me I put to him, and he explained them clearly and lucidly. I remember how he explained the relation between God and the individual souls as *Samasti-Atman* (collective self) and *Byasti-atmans* (constituent selves) and sought to make it clear by comparing it with the relation between the Self of the whole human body and the selves of the living cells within the body. He pointed out that the human ego was distinct from the egos of the cells which constituted the entire bodily organism, though the latter were all merged in the former and the former comprised all the latter. It did not of course mean, he emphasised, that the human ego was the aggreagte or sum-total of the particular egos of the innumerable living cells within the body or that the latter were parts of the former. It rather meant that the collective Self of the entire body was pervading the particular selves of the cells, was sustaining them and regulating their functions and was the ground of unity and uniformity among them, and that the

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multiplicity of these selves owed their origin and development and sustenance and mutual relations to and participated in the life of that one total self of the body. Similar was the relation between God the universal Self and *Jivas* the individual selves. The latter originated from, existed in, were governed by, participated in the life of and were ultimately merged in the former. On some occasions he expressed his own conviction in this way. "This world is the outcome of the imagination of God, it becomes regulated by Divine Providence; like Jivas appearing in our dream we belong to the dream of God; hence we have not got the least independent existence; the notion of independence within us is wholly illusory." On one occasion I put to him some question on Rámánuja's philosophy, to which he replied with frankness "I have not studied Ramanuja's system."

Swami Siárámjee was strongly against Vedanta. I had much talk with him about Vedantic doctrines. I would take up the Vedantic position, while he would take up the scientific position. He had formerly been a Professor of Science. I was, however, not temperamentally disposed to accept his conclusion. He would often base his arguments on strong commonsense. He was bitterly opposed to the conception of the illusoriness and unreality of the world. However, at that time I had imbibed only a strong belief in the Vedantic doctrines, but as I had no fair knowledge of the logic and philosophy of Vedanta, I could not convince an open-minded intelligent brain like Siaramjee's with my arguments. Sometimes he used to put to me "Swamijee!

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I had many talks with Sadhu Mangalnathjee whom you Sadhus take to be a great thinker and scholar, but I assure you that he failed to convince me of the validity of the Vedantic conclusion." Naturally Siaramjee did not like fatuous and fruitless discussion on philosophical doctrines, which he regarded as mere waste of breath. He was chiefly concerned with practice. It was he who first pointed out to me the dangers of living on unsubstantial diet while practising deep meditation. He used to say, "It is sheer folly and not *Vairagya* (unworldiness)" he would point out with biting sarcasm "to continue strenuous practice of deep meditation on poor diet. The terrific strain tells in a little while and the fagged brain refuses to make a move on." He taught Yoga to many educated religious aspirants, but as I had no leaning towards Hatha Yoga I did not receive actual Yoga-training from him. Siaramjee, however, had much affection for me, and so he favoured me with many practical lessons on Yoga which helped me in the progress of my meditation. He was the most sincere Yogi I ever met. Yoga demands systematic training from competent teachers. Some Yogis I found who knew very little about the true principle and practice of Yoga, but who pretended to possess a good deal of knowledge about it. There are really very few who have got scientific knowledge of the subject. Some are found to have acquired a certain amount of physiological knowledge, but among them very few are found to be conversant with the inner spirit of the system. Yogis who have attained *Siddhi* or psychic powers are very rarely to be found anywhere

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in the country. On some occasions I heard from the disciples and admirers of some Yogis about the wonderful capacities of their Gurus. I went to them, remained with them for days together, watched and examined their conduct minutely, and was disappointed to find that the disciples' versions were wrong or exaggerated. Siaramjee used to say to me "I have hunted for Siddhas in Yoga, to many Yogis had I been, but I have not come across any Siddha. I myself have practised hard all my life, but I have not experienced any *Siddhi.*"

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CHAPTER XIII

Kaila'sh and Ma'nsarowar

After five months' stay at Uttarkashi I came down to Hardwar for a short stay and then left for Gorakhpur. I found many Sadhus assembled there with the purpose of starting together for Pashupatináth, Nepal. Ba'ba'jee ordered me to accompany the Sadhus. Just at this time my young co-disciple A'ka'lu came to see Babajee from Mymensingh. He also expressed eagerness to go with me and got Babajee's permission. When we were about to start for Nepal with the Nágá-Sa'dhus at 10 P. M., Babajee ordered both of us (Akalu and myself) at the eleventh hour to extend our pilgrimage up to Kailásh. He said—"old age is not fit for such difficult journey, you are young, now is your time, you should finish your pilgrimage to Kailásh and Mánsarowar just at this age. See that you may get rid of your false notions भ्रम छुट जाना चाहिए। So saying he gave a few rupees and asked us to follow the Nepal route. He gave us necessary instructions with regard to the journey. He advised us to beg our food all the way. We bowed down to him and with his blessings started for Nepal.

From Gorakhpur we went to Raxaul (Birganj) by train. From Birganj we were required to go on foot to Ka'ta'mund, capital of Nepal, for a visit to Pashupatinath. It was five days' hard and tedious journey. We had to keep pace with the Naga-Sadhus. It was really a terrible task. They would rise very early in the

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morning and be on the move without break-fast. Sometimes they would walk the whole day without stopping for meals. Sometimes they would not rest for a single moment after meals, but move on. I considered myself very hardy; at home I was nicknamed *Loha'* (Iron) and was spoken of as *steel-hardy* by many of my friends; but now I felt that my hardiness was insignificant when compared with theirs. But it pained me to think that such excellent human materials were not properly utilized for the true good of themselves and the country and were allowed to be wasted spiritually as well as physically. These extraordinarily hardy, robust, brave and painstaking Naga Sadhus were generally illiterate without any spiritual training, without any lofty idealism. Most of them were addicted to Gánja, Bha'ng, Charas and other intoxicants. On account of ill-breeding they were generally arrogant, hot-headed and quarrelsome. They had very little knowledge and practice of spiritual self-discipline. I thought with sadness that they had immense potentialities, which found no scope for actualisation, and that in actual life their energy was almost wholly misdirected and abused. However, as it was Gurujee's order to accompany them, we must not part company with them, whatever difficulties we might experience. After 5 days' laborious journey we got relief by reaching Pashupatinath. Having stopped there about a month, we two with two other Dandi Swamis started for Kailash.

It ought to be mentioned here that I took the journey to Kailash not with the motive of seeing *Tirtha* (sacred place) or acquiring *Punya* (religious

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merit), because I did no longer retain any such faith. This was a sort of belief in idolatry, which I had long forsaken. I went to Kailash only to abide by the order of Babajee and also to satisfy my curiosity to see such notable places. Sometimes a thought would creep into my mind that Babajee might have faith in popular religion, in idolatry and pilgrimage, and for that reason he might have in consistency with his views ordered me to undertake this journey. But I did not share his faith. Should I be consistent with myself in carrying out this order? Should I spend my time and energy over something I did not sincerely believe in? This doubt was however met by a counter-thought, which encouraged me to move on. Babajee had pronounced these significant words "भ्रम छुट जाना चाहिए।". Perhaps there was some lurking and insidious error or misconception in my mind which this journey would help me in removing. Perhaps the experiences I would gather in course of the journey would contribute to my future progress in the path of spirituality. At any rate my most sincere well-wisher and spiritual guide considered it necessary for my welfare. I must follow his advice. Thus I proceeded onwards.

We first started for Muktinath,—15 days' journey from the Nepal capital. On the way we had to suffer from excessive heat. We had to live mostly on alms. Food was certainly not what we were accustomed to. Moreover rest was out of the question; we had always to be on the move. It was difficult for poor villagers on the way to feed and house four of us for more than a day. It was a tedious track across the Himalayan

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ranges; we had to do many steep climbs and giddy heights. It was an up-hill and down-dale business. Out health suffered. However we went on undaunted, braced for every hardship. We saw many hot springs, many *Tirthas*, and many charming sceneries. We saw the Gandaki-river-bed where *Sa'lagram Sila's* worshipped as the symbols of Vishnu, were lying about in plenty.

From Muktinath we went to Damodar Kund, a small pond just below the glacier, which was the source of the Gandaki. This was the most difficult journey we ever made in our lives. One of our companions almost fainted through excessive cold. We returned to Muktinath after 6 days, losing a good deal of flesh meanwhile. From Muktinath we came down to Puthan-side and proceeded along the long ribbon of a road to Kailash. On the way I was gripped by disease which only added to my sufferings. There was a sharp rise of temperature-103°-104°F. which continued for several days. Without a hole or a hovel to turn to for rest, I had to trudge over the frowning heights with the fever on. But this was not all. I badly hurt my toe which made walking extremely painful. Limping and bare-footed, I had to plod along the weary ways in a raging fever for days on end. On the way when we were very tired and hungry, we could sometimes obtain food just sufficient for only one man. Sometimes we had to go without food the whole day. I remember that one day we began our journey at 4 A. M., mounted up a high hill and reached its foot on the other side at about 9 P. M., walking all the while, without a morsel of food because we did not get any. We had no umbrellas to

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protect our heads from sun and shower. Often we were drenched to the skin and almost devoured by cold. Our health and strength began to fail, but our determination held. It hardly ever flagged or flinched. During our travel in the heart of Nepal we saw the famous Sadhu of Saragdwari about whose *Siddhi* we had heard so much from the members of the royal family of Nepal who were his disciples. We stayed and discussed various themes with him for several days, closely watching him the while, but failed to discover any *Siddhi* in the man. On another occasion we met elsewhere on our way a Sadhu-disciple of this great Sadhu, who also was reputed to be a *Siddha*. We watched him too but again could not discover any *Siddhi* in him. We halted at Sailyán for a few days. There we were suspected to be political absconders. The son of the Governor wanted to put us to prison and tried to frighten us in various ways. At last when he was shown a letter, addressed to a Subádár living in the border to render help to us, we were allowed to pass on. The letter had been of his own accord written by the Superintendent of Police, Nepal, who used to visit us often for *Satsang*. However, we proceeded and crossing the Nepal-border reached Tibet, severely suffering from cold on the way.

In Tibet (and in Nepal too) we saw Buddhists devoted to a peculiar form of *Sadhana*. It consisted in the movement of a small wheel round the head of a short stick in accompaniment with the muttering of a mystic formula—"*OM Mani Padme Hum.*" Perhaps this moving wheel was a symbol for the constant flux of the world-process in which nothing was permanent.

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Many times we broke our journey at the Tibetan *Maths* (monasteries) of *Sadhus* or *Lamas*. Sometimes we went to see *La'ma'-Sa'dhus* living nearby. We came in contact with some old Lamas, who were popularly believed to be several hundred years old, though their appearance did not give any indication of such unusually old age. We were favourably impressed by their amiable and cordial behaviour towards us. Hindu Sannyasins in general were known to them as *Ka'shi-La'ma's* and they cherished good feelings towards them. Some of them appeared to be saints of a higher order, but as we did not know their language, nor did they know ours, we could not interchange thoughts and profit by their talks and teachings. Only once we had bitter experience of the conduct of a Lama. Reaching the food of Kailash, we went to take shelter at a Lama-Math. A ferocious dog ran after us and one of our companions wanted to hit the dog to save himself and us. This enraged the Lama and we were turned out. Sadhus driven out by a Sadhu like so many dogs for a dog's sake!

Those who go to Kailash generally circumambulate (*parikrama'*) the hill. Kailash is a commanding ice-capped peak towering like a pyramid in one of the big snow-covered ranges of the Himalayas, and it takes three days to go round it. There are three or four Lama-Maths on the way, where the pilgrims can stop after each day's journey. When our first days's journey was drawing to a close, there was a heavy shower of rain and we suffered intensely from cold. On the second day it began to rain soon after we started. It commenced with a torrentious heavy downpour, but very

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soon it began to snow thick and fast like showers of cotton-wool from the heavens. By and by it looked like a snow-storm. We found a body of Tibetans, who were travelling behind us, overtake us at a run and then leave us behind. They could anticipate the danger ahead, and hurriedly advanced to save their lives. We were ignorant of the atmospheric conditions of the locality and hence did not care to accelerate our speed. The Tibetans had not the courtesy or kindness to warn us and make us wiser with their experience. We had another odd experience:—we found that we could not move fast enough in that high altitude not so much through exhaustion perhaps as insufficiency of Oxygen in the atmosphere. The rarefied air was beginning to take its toll. We were four excepting the coolies, whom we had to hire to carry our food (only *Chh'ttu* that is, pulse-dust and no rice or flour) on which we were to live for 12 days. One Dandi Swami was ahead of the party. Akalu was a little behind him. The coolies followed them. I myself was behind the coolies, and I was followed by another Dandi Swami. Now, when the snow-storm grew fierce, the coolies acquainted with local conditions, apprehended danger and without a word of warning to Akalu and Dandi Swami, took to their heels leaving the party to shift for themselves. The snow-fall grew yet faster and thicker, the narrow ribbon-like path zig-zagging before us looked like being wiped out altogether; the first Dandi Swami realised our grave crisis. He at once hurried up and warned Akalu to run for his life. Now we two remained behind. When the Dandi behind me realised that our path was

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shortly going to be covered with snow, he got frightened and called out to me. I was trying my best to walk faster, watching from afar Akalu's movements. Now, just a turned back in response to the Dandi's call, Akalu slipped out of sight and I could not know the path ahead. The Dandi was crying and showering many bad names upon our forward comrades, for they seemed to have fled with their lives, leaving us behind to die under the snow. In a few moments no path could be seen. It was all snow; the path was clean obliterated. Now began our grim race for life in that interminable ocean of snow. Sometimes we did not know where our next step would find us. Was it empty space, a piece of hard stone or a ditch? We did not know where fate would land us the very next moment. Our only resource was the stick with pointed iron at its end. We had to feel each step ahead with the stick. This made quick march impossible. We had to bend down and strike the snow forcibly to make sure the solidity of the next step. Our blankets became heavy with snow and a weary burden on account of the snow that was deposited on them. It needed vigorous efforts to shake off the snow and to make them lighter. These struggles began to tell; our strength was fast ebbing away. So long we could walk, now we felt fairly at the end of our tether. Hands and feet were growing more and more numb and stiff every moment. It was with extreme difficulty that we could manage to keep the blanket on, hold the water-pot with one hand and support the entire weight of the body on the stick held in the other hand. The legs appeared to be too heavy and weak to carry the

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weighty body any further. It was only the undying instinct of self-preservation that kept us stumbling along. Hardly had we reached the point from which Akalu had gone out of sight; when our body and mind were reduced to such a state of utter exhaustion that we bade adieu to all hopes of survival. We were shaking in every limb with cold and felt like falling down breathless. When all seemed lost and death stalked close behind, Dandi Swami gasped out these pathetic words to me "नाथजी, बैठ जाईए" "Nathji! please sit down." What he meant to say was this; as death seemed inevitable and imminent it was better to sit down to meditation on Brahman and breathe our last in that condition. It was a counsel of despair. I was temperamentally incapable of passively yielding to fate, till the last drop of my physical and mental energy was utilized and spent up. Though without any ray of hope, I was determined to struggle upto the very end. So I said to him "Well, Swamijee, let us try our last, please, do'nt sit down." At this extreme moment, I remember, one thought flashed upon my mind and filled it with vigour., viz., that I had gone there to carry out Babajee's orders. and I could not die in that way. Swamijee also was heartened up by my determination and moved on at my request.

Whither to turn on that unchartered ocean of snow, was the next question. To the right or downwards, which should it be? Swamijee asked me to turn to the right, while I exhorted him to take the downward path. However, Swamijee followed my direction. After proceeding some distance, we discovered faint traces of a

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foot-way. This encouraged us and gave us further strength and hope. As we walked down, the path became more and more conspicuous. Now we could perceive that this was really a path-way leading somewhere. After proceeding further in that direction, we heard the sound आलेख आलेख*. This was the voice of the other Dandi Swami who had walked before us. He was shouting at the top of his voice, so that we might hear and follow it. At last we were sure of escaping the jaws of death in the present crisis. By this time the violence of the snow-fall too began to abate, and we, inspired by hope and trust, could walk faster and respond to the call of the Dandi.

Now it so happened that just two days ago two Lama-Sadhus had arrived there for the purpose of worshipping a divinised piece of stone having some script on it, and they had pitched a tent on the way. The other Dandi and Akalu had reached there, tired and fatigued, it is needless to add, after the hard struggle for life. The Lamas on their part received them warmly and served them very well. They were seated by the fire-side and offered hot tea. They could not however enjoy the warm drink and comfort of the cosy fire-side because their hearts bled for their comrades lost in the snows. When we reached there the first

* The word आलेख is probably a corrupt form of अलक्ष्य the Invisible. The Sadhus of some sects utter this word as a name for God. There was an understanding among us that when by chance we would fall out of sight from one another in that mountainous region we would shout आलेख आलेख to draw the attention of the comrades.

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Dandi Swami shed tears of joy. Akalu said "I thought Shantinathjee (myself) would escape somehow, but Dandi Swami was lost." No sooner had we reached the tent than the Lamas caught hold of us, removed our wet shoes with their hands, took us to the fire-side and gave us tea and *Chattu*. We four ate and drank together with great joy and with a deep sense of thankfulness to the Lama-Sadhus for their invaluable help. With vocal thanks we also gave them some money too. This is a short description of our second day's journey. Nothing particular or interesting happened on the third day.

After seeing Kailash we went to Mánsarovar, a big circular lake surrounded by hills, and sanctified by many holy associations. We took bath there and passed in a cave one sleepless night owing to excessive cold. Subsequently we crossed the Tibet-borders and entered the British Territory. I was eager to stop somewhere for a comparatively long period in order to recoup my health with substantial food. So we parted company with the Dandi Swamis and hastened towards Gorakhpur. We took sixteen days to reach Almorah. When we were about to enter the town at dusk, we happened to meet Bálánand Swami of Baidyanath on the way. When on enquiry he came to know that I was disciple of Baba Gambhirnath, he said "I have heard that one revolutionary has become a disciple of Babajee; are you the same youth? Let me see if you carry the flag-sign of *Juga'ntar* tatooed on your person." However, he took us to a Sadhu nearby, gave him some money and asked him to look to our comforts. Next day we met Swami

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Turianandjee at the Ramkrishna Cottage. He invited me to pass a few days at the cottage. After enjoying his sweet company for three or four days we started for Gorakhpur. So ended our Kailash-journey.

Now when I ponder over what I lost and what I gained by our journey to Kailash, I find that I lost much and gained much. I lost my health,—my robust physique was reduced to a skeleton through seven months' continued exertion under various climatic conditions,—burning heat, drenching rain and freezing cold—with insufficient and unsubstantial food. (Akalu got chronic-diarrhoea from which he could not recover all his life). And I lost the deeply concentrated state of my mind. During our journey at day-time we had to walk long and weary distances on foot along difficult mountainous paths and come in contact with diverse kinds of men and animals and things. This made the mind unsteady and inconstant. On account of the daily-changing situations and want of food and shelter, thoughts were naturally directed to what we should eat and drink, where we should take shelter, how we should protect ourselves from danger and so on. We had to enquire of rich men or *Bhaktas* who might feed and house us in the next village. Often we had to beg raw materials from door to door to cook our own food. Owing to long and weary tramps at day-time, we badly needed rest and sleep at night. So there was no time for the *Sadhana*—practice of concentration and meditation. Consequently the calm and serene state of mind, which I had acquired through long and arduous practice, was at this time practically

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lost to me. What I retained was the memory of that blissful state of consciousness and a hankering for regaining it whenever opportunities would present themselves.

Let me now narrate what I gained from this pilgrimage. I gained first-hand experience of different peoples and countries, with diverse manners and customs and habits holding all grades and shades of religious views and following various modes of self-discipline and worship. These experiences gave a shake to my previous convinctions and beliefs that the noble customs and habits and moral ideas of our own society were essential for the goodness of human life everywhere and at all times, that the religious views to which we were accustomed represented the whole truth and were based on the infallible truth-realization of the seers, that the modes of worship and self-discipline, about which we got instruction, were the sole path-ways to salvation and truth-realization, and so on. Now I found that the customs and ideas and opinions and religious practices, prevailing in the human society, are of diverse kinds and they are in many cases the results of local conditions, environments, influences of powerful personalities, political and economic situations, etc. Most of them had very little to do with ultimate Truth or the ultimate Goal of human iife. The experiences that are gained from contact with diverse sorts of people and from the observation of diverse kinds of natural scenery have an elevating effect upon the ordinary human mind. They widen the outlook, remove many superstitions, give violent shocks to narrowness and bigotry and impress

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the mind with an idea of the greatness and many-sidedness of the world we live in. The noble associations of the places of pilgrimage exert a purifying influence upon the intellectual and moral life of the believers. The dangers and difficulties that are faced in course of the journey and the apparently miraculous ways in which the pilgrims are often saved from the most critical situations have their own lessons. Moreover, man has an inherent desire to see the varieties of natural scenery, to visit the places of historical and geographical interests and specially the sacred places of holy associations. This desire remains unsatisfied, until and unless some renowned places of pilgrimage, so highly spoken of by the books and the visitors, are actually seen. When the most celebrated places are once visited, the interest vanishes and the desire is got rid of. The places are inviting, so long as they are not seen. Thus I realized the significance of the lesson which Babajee gave us at the time of our starting for the pilgrimage, viz. भ्रम छुट जाना चाहिए।

We reached the Gorakhnath Temple, Gorakhpur, in the evening and at night we had talks about our Kailash-journey with Babajee. He inquisitively put to us various questions about different places, routes and, of course, we answered him as best as we could. I put to Babajee particularly this question—Had Vijoy Krishan Goswamiji gone to this very Kailash, where we went ? To this question he replied affirmatively. He also named the spot (between Kailash and Mansarovar) where he had met Gosaijee. We recognised the spot, as we also had passed through it.

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CHAPTER XIV

Guruji Passes Away

This time I stopped at the Gorakhnath Temple for some days. One night when Babajee, Baroda Babu (our co-disciple) and myself were sitting together, there was some talk about Yoga. In course of the conversation Babajee said "Within the province of Hatha-Yoga there are some most effective esoteric processes, which make the yogi eminently fit for easily attaining success in Raja Yoga which leads to Truth-realisation, but the successful practice of those processes requires a high order of physical and psychical worthiness, which is very rarely to be found." I felt inquisitive to learn them. Next day I put to Babajee "If you think me worthy of practising esoteric Yoga, you may kindly teach me." With his deeper spiritual insight he was perhaps aware that my mental inclination and disposition were not fit for such a course of Sadhana. But it was not his practice to impose his own will upon anybody. He with his usual calmness pointed his finger to a bundle hanging in his room, which contained some books, and asked me to take it down. When I gave it to him, he took out from it the celebrated small treatise on Yoga, namely Hatha-Yoga-Pradipiká and advised me to read it first. Judging from the smallness of the size of the book, I thought that its contents also were small. I told him "I shall finish it within three days." He said "No hurry, read it attentively and learn everything well." I took the book and read it and tried to understand its contents

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as far as my knowledge of the subject allowed. I found that here several processes of Hatha-Yoga were described and they were asserted to be necessary stepping stones for the higher spiritual self-discipline of Raja-Yoga. By means of Hatha-Yoga the body, the nervous system and the mind were to be brought under perfect control, they should be made thoroughly organized and spiritualised, and the spiritual energy lying diffused in them should be released, awakened and concentrated, and then this liberated energy should be devoted to the contemplation and meditation on the Absolute Truth, Paramátman or Brahman.

I had no liking for Hatha-Yoga. From what I had heard of it, I had formed the idea that it consisted in some mechanical processes, that by means of it some supernatural or occult powers might be acquired and that for a true aspirant for spiritual Truth-realization these processes and the powers acquired through them had little significance. I therefore thought that the time and energy spent for the practice of Hatha-Yoga would be spent in vain.

Now after living at Rikhikesh with the Vedantins and hearing discourses from them, I got intoxicated with their Vedantic ideas. So my dislike of Hatha-Yoga grew stronger still. Hence I thought that it was an error or momentary weakness on my part to express to Babajee my eagerness to be initiated into the practice of esoteric Yoga. Perhaps I was prompted by the vanity of being regarded as one among the few. I was afraid that if I returned the book to Babajee when he was

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alone, he might probably teach me some lessons on Hatha-Yoga, which I did not like to practise. If, however, I returned it in the presence of other men, he would not speak to me anything, because as a rule he would not speak to us about these matters in the presence of others. So just to avoid learning Hatha-Yoga I adopted a cunning device. Without drawing his attention, I silently put the book behind him, while he was engaged in talk with others. But his attention could not be avoided. He asked me in his natural gentle tone, "What are you doing?" I replied "I am returning the book." He said, "Put it there." I did so. He did not seem to be at all surprised and asked me no question about it then or thereafter. Thus on account of my Vedantic inclination I voluntarily lost the golden opportunity of learning esoteric Yoga from such a Siddha Yogi as my Guru was universally recognized to be.

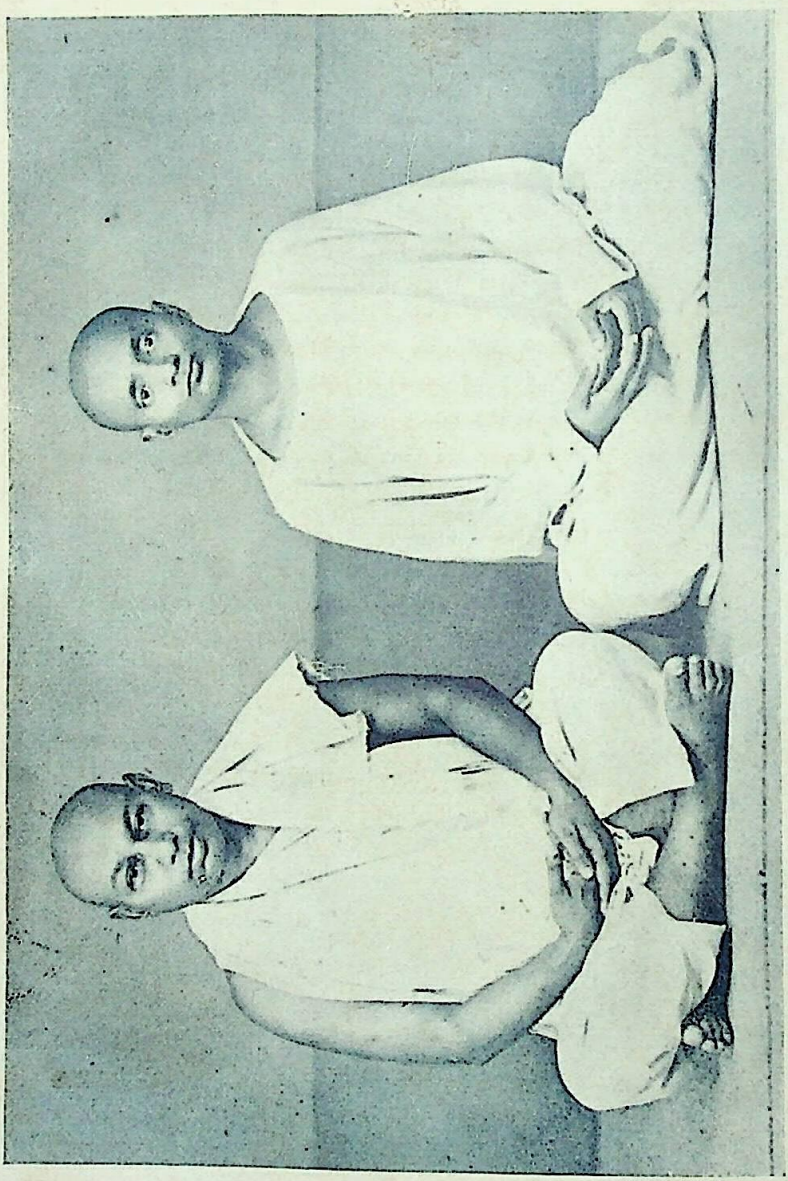
Akalu had gone home after return from Kailash. He came back to Gorakhpur after some time with the purpose of being initiated into Sannyasa. His father, a co-disciple of ours, had already dedicated him (Akalu) at the feet of Babajee. After Akalu got Sannyasa (his present name is Sadhu Nibrittinath), Babajee ordered me to take him with me. We both went to Hardwar and stopped at Kaul Das's Ashrama, where Sadhus of every sect were given food and shelter. Kaul Das was old and blind; he was one of the distinguished Sadhus of Hardwar. He had fair knowledge of Vedanta. I had occasional talks with him about Vedanta, and he was so pleased that he entreated me to learn Panchadasi from him. I could not however comply with his request.

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Sadhu Santinatha

Sadhu Nibrittinatha

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Nibrittinath and I lived together, passing our days in Sadhana and study. We used to wake the whole nights alternately i. e. every nig t while I was asleep he would keep awake and while he would sleep I would be waking.

We two (Nibrittinath and myself) were stopping at Kaul Das's place, when an invitation offered itself at the instance of the Ram Krishna Ashrama at Kankhal for our taking *prasa'd* (food-offerings) on the occasion of the birth-day anniversary of Swami Vivekananda. The Ashrama is situated at a distance of two miles from our residence. We proposed to foot the way and started. On our path lies Brahma Kunda (Harki Pauri), where many Sadhus and mendicants, some of whom seemed to be professional recipients of alms, presented themselves before us for full diet, such as flour, Dál and fuels. Feeling their solicitations urgent and painfully mingled with entreaties, it did our heart good to approach a shop-keeper with the request that the victuals might be given to the supplicants then present. The grocer acceded readily. But very shortly we found ourselves thronged in about by ever-increasing circles of such members. Nibrittinath now told me that we had only nine rupees with us. Thereupon the shop-keeper was asked to total his account of bills for ration. He said that food-stuff worth Rs. 15/- had already been distributed. As we had no more money, we were constrained to put a stop to the programme. I paid the shopkeeper nine rupees and entreated him with some emotion, saying " Well ! Believe me, I promise to pay up the balance in one week." The shop-keeper put

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faith in my words though I was altogether unknown to him."

Now, we were obliged to find our way out of the throng already hemming us in from all sides, straight into the path leading to the Ram Krishna Mission, where also other mendicants followed suit, and to avoid them there was no other alternative for us than to run on. Even then we could not escape. Now I addressed them "Well, not a farthing has been left to me now, what I have in my possession is only this cloth. If you do not let me go, I shall have to part with this too." At this the crowd departed and we reached the Mission. There we were entertained with the lectures of the famous Pandit Jogendra Tarkatirtha (afterwards Mahámahopádhaya) and met for the first time Swami Rághavánanda (then Brahmachari Sitápati) with whom I had hearty talks at night and both Sitapati and myself resolved to sit away the whole night composed in meditation. We passed the whole night in silent comtemplation in a sitting posture. Returning from the Ashram in the morning I wrote to my co-disciple Surendranath Banerjee, Income Tax Commissioner, who used to send me Rs. 6/- per month during a certain period at that time. As soon as the money was received, the grocer was paid with sincere thanks for the confidence he had reposed in me.

Here I may allude to the incident which led me to think of keeping some money with me, though this was not in my view consistent with the true ideal of a Sannyasi life. After my communion with Swami Siyáramji at Uttarkashi, I came to be aware of the

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grave necessity of getting substantial food such as Ghee or milk for a practitioner of Yoga or meditation. Here not only did Swamiji advise me to have these at my disposal, but finding me in a hesitating mood to beg money of anyone he forced me to write to one of my intimate co-disciples Baroda Babu, a school teacher at Gorakhpur for a monthly help of three rupees, with which he helped me for sometime. When I recollect Swamiji's disinterested affection for me my heart is filled with love, regard and admiration for him. Though I could not bring myself round to agree with him about the nature of Truth, still I shall be ever bowing down before his personality with reverence. How sweet the loving heart of a true Sadhu!

After passing sometime at Hardwar we went to Rishikesh. There I again met Swami Prakasananda Purijee at Kailash Math. I requested him to teach me some works on Vedanta, on condition that he would give me lessons alone (not along with other students) and at my convenient hour. He complied with my request. Sometimes, I remember, I used to go to his place just after taking my meals when he would be taking rest on his bed; but no sooner did I open the door of his room than he would get up and give me lessons without expressing the least vexation. He advised me "As you have read Bhatti and Raghubansa, you will be able to follow Vedantic works, you need not waste your time in making a special study of Grammar; I shall teach you a few works on Vedanta; go through them well and you will by yourself understand all other works." With these words of advice he asked me to

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read Gaudapáda's Káriká on the Mándukya Upanisad, with Sankara's commentary and Ananda's gloss. I informed Mangalnathjee about my study. He of his own accord affectionately asked me to go to him every day and place before him what I had learnt, so that he might clarify the points still further. This order I joyfully obeyed. In his usual impressive style, he would go deeply into the subject and touch the dark corners with the light of his intellect. Real Sadhus are generally so loving, so eager to impart knowledge when they find a Sadhaka sincerely inquistive and competent to learn!

I will now go into the mental changes I experienced at the time. The sweetness of heart which I acquired through the practice of devotion, emotional love, and self-surrender to Personal God had by degrees left me in course of my study of the philosophical works on Vedanta and the contemplation on the character of Impersonal Brahman and the identity of the self with It. I learnt to look upon the cosmic system as an illusory show. The phenomena of the world appeared to be a myth, a phantasmagoria, an unsubstantial dream without any essential relation with my true Self. I learnt to think of Self as wholly unrelated to the phenomena of my body and mind, as above time and space, above all changes and limitations, above all wants and desires, above all emotions and sentiments. Thus I acquired a spirit of indifference in respect of all worldly matters even in respect of my bodily requirements. Prolonged contemplation on the transcendent nature of the Self awakened in me also a spirit of fearlessness, which the practice of love and devotion to the Divine could not

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give me. In my earlier life also, as the reader might have noticed, the element of fear was not very conspicuous in my nature. I was a dare-devil boy. I could defy dangers and difficulties to a far greater extent than my friends and comrades. But now my fearlessness was raised to the spiritual plane. It was based on the consciousness of the eternity and divinity of my Self. I was Brahman and whom should I care! This spirit of fearlessness and independence found, curiously enough, a peculiar form of expression in my dealings with others. I became unyielding and obstinate in my relations with those with whom I came in contact, particularly with those who differed from me in philosophical views and made any advocacy or special pleading in favour of doctrines or dogmas contrary to my convictions. After I embraced *Sannyasa*, I had no worldly interests and there was little probability of any conflicts arising between me and other people with regard to worldly affairs. I lived in the world of philosophy and religion, and my interests were almost confined to the religio-philosophical views which appealed to my heart and intellect. I was so much intoxicated with the views I entertained that I could not imagine that they might be wrong, that there might be any fallacy in the arguments on which those views were based, that any conclusions contradictory to those which I accepted could be true. My obstinate adherence to and advocacy for the religio-philosophical views accepted by me for the time being sometimes put me in opposition to scholars and *Sa'dhakas* of divergent philosophical schools. Whenever any controversy arose, I would most vehemently put my case and refute the arguments of the

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opponent. If the opponent was found to be stubborn, I would sometimes lose the calmness and equanimity of my mind. However respectable and influential the opponent might be and whatever services I might have received from him, I would not feel the least hesitation in showing my temper to him and using the sharpest languages to dislodge him from his position. With all the inner softness of my heart, which could not hear a sad tale of sufferings even of the meanest creature, I became in this way a quarrelsome Sadhu on philosophical field. My spirit of independence and fearlessness made me a hot debator, intolerant of contrary views and in some degree rough in my conversations with people of opposing views in times of controversy. I would go to the length of thinking and saying that all persons who did not subscribe to the only true view, which I held, were ignorant fools. When I reflect upon this, I see how the noblest moral virtues may turn into vices and how the sincerest devotion to a well-established philosophical doctrine may make a truth-seeker blind and arrogant. It should be noted that what appeared to be arrogance, haughtiness, roughness and insolence to others was to me nothing but the most sincere, earnest, forceful and fearless advocacy for the perfectly established truth. During the period I am speaking of, my mind was wholly possessed by the ideas of *Nirguna* (attributeless impersonal) Brahman, the identity of Atman and Brahman and the illusoriness of the diversified universe. Afterwards my views have undergone changes, but my temperament has practically remained the same.

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While we were passing our time in this way at Rikhikesh, deeply devoted to the study of Vedanta and contemplation on the Truth attained therefrom, suddenly we received a telegram from Gorakhpur informing us about Babajee's illness and asking us to start immediately for seeing him. We came to Gorakhpur and found Babajee ill, but not totally broken down and bed-ridden. There was however some noticeable change in his outer demeanour. He had been habitually grave, taciturn and inward-minded, and a state of communion with the Infinite and Eternal had almost turned into his second nature. But still, as the chief administrator of the Gorakhnath Temple and its property and as the spiritual guide of so many disciples and admirers, he had to talk with people not only on spiritual, but also on secular matters, to keep his eyes upon the management of the monastery, to give instructions to the truth-seekers and to remain to some extent in touch with the outer world. But now we observed that he withdrew himself from the external affairs in a far greater measure. His eyes were almost always turned inward. He seldom opened his lips. He was constantly in a meditative mood. He seemed to be taking leave from the world for good and merging himself in the Absolute. However, finding his health outwardly a little improved, I one day asked his permission to leave the Ashram and to retire to some solitary place alone for the purpose of deeper contemplation and meditation. I was then eager to be away from all distracting circumstances and to concentrate all my energy upon the object of my spiritual ambition. I did not like that even my spiritual

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brother, Nibrittinath, so earnest for Sadhana and so charming in his behaviour though he was, should accompany me. Babajee, while giving me permission to depart, asked me to take Nibritti along with me. He said, "Nibritti obeys you, acts according to your advice, why not take him with you? Both of you may pass days in some solitary place nearby (say at Jushi, Allahabad), I shall send message to you when I go to Calcutta after returning from the village." He gave me this direction, not in the form of an order, but in the form of a suggestion, in a very mild and sweet and winning tone. I, of course, readily submitted. He then fixed the date and time for his leaving Gorakhpur and going to the calm and quiet atmosphere of the Mofussil. But alas! on that very date and at that very time he departed from this mortal world to the most tranquil atmosphere of immortal bliss. I got a very rude shock and wept bitterly for days together. It was perhaps the saddest bereavement of my life.

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CHAPTER XV

Preparation for Deeper Sadhana

After some days I left Gorakhpur and went alone to pass my days and nights in meditation in the solitary region of Mount Abu. On the way I stopped at Brindavan, Jaipur, Puskar and Abu Road. At Abu Road I met one party of *Na'ga' Sa'dhus* and spent a few days with them.* These *Naga Sadhus* generally travel together, each party consisting of 20, 30 or 40 or more. They take tents, camels, horses, bullock-carts with them. Each party has one head, called Mahant, and his assistants, one Manager (called Vazir) and one Kotwál. The routine of these *Naga Sadhus* is as follows:—They rise very early and take bath, and besmear their bodies with ashes; afterwards about half an hour or so a few of them repeat the name of God, and read some scriptural works containing hymns; then there is A'rati (kindling of light, burning of incense etc. in the presence of the Deity) and they all stand in a body and sing hymns in chorus; after this they take breakfast and excepting the head-Mohant, the cook and one or two others all Sadhus are despatched to some town or big village or to different villages in different batches

* Naga means naked. But these Sadhus are not naked; they wear blankets, clothes, many of them keep *Dhuni* (fire) and pass days and nights near it. There are a very few who put on only one *Kaupin*. These Sadhus follow blindly the practice of remaining naked in the periodical Sadhu-congregation, viz, Kumbha Mela.

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to collect food-stuff and money, which they do by hook or crook and not unoften by applying force or by rebuke or by instilling into the hearts of the simple villagers the fear of hell after death. These Sadhus are interested in such collection because they receive certain share of the collected funds. On their return at about 3 or 4 P.M. they get food; if they return late, say at about 6 P.M., they take food after evening *Arati*. After *Arati* they lie down early as they are fatigued with their adventurous journey and business during day-time. Rarely does one come across a Sadhu who practises *Sadhana* during night-time. Almost all these Naga Sadhus are addicted to Gánjá and Bhung, they are illiterate, very quarrelsome and haughty. Contact with such Sadhus brought about a change in my attitude towards Sadhus in general. I had profound admiration and reverence for Sadhus, but when I mixed with them, observed them, found that they passed their life doing nothing whatsoever for their own mental or spiritual advancement or for the welfare of the motherland or fellowmen, I began to look upon them as a useless burden upon the society. There are of course a handful of genuine Sadhus who may be found hither and thither (sadhus of a superior order), who are sincerely and earnestly devoted to intellectual culture, moral and spiritual self-discipline and sometimes to philanthropic work as well. But their number is too small in comparison with the number of parasites upon the society in the garb of Sadhus.

Reaching Mount Abu I began to live in a lonely cave (old *Ha'thi Guf'i*). I took my meals from a neighbouring temple (Raghunáth Mandir) only once in day

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time. The Vaisnava Mohant DámodarDásji had non-sectarian outlook, he would take much loving care for me. Here I was deeply absorbed in meditation and spent a very short time in study. During my practice, sometimes I used to think that I was the changeless witness of all my mental phenomena which appeared and disappeared momentarily without in any way affecting myself. Sometimes I used to think that my mind was present before me as an object of my consciousness and I used to observe it as a master-superviser with the resolve that no desire or emotion or passion or thought should be allowed to arise in it and to disturb its stillness and equanimity. I would keep such strict watch upon the mind that I would be conscious of whatever idea or thought, desire or feeling, passion or propensity, might make its appearance in it and would immediately drive it out and restore its calmness. I would always try to remember that I was neither the body nor the mind, but was the self-luminous changeless self transcending both the body and the mind, witnessing them from above and in no way affected by their wants and requirements, enjoyments and sufferings, efforts and modifications. Through prolonged practice I could make the consciousness of this true self steady and constant. While walking or sitting or lying down or taking my food or suffering from any illness, I would never forget or would never allow myself to forget that I was the witness-self, that I was neither the agent nor the patient, neither the doer nor the enjoyer nor the sufferer, but merely the wide-awake spectator of all these actions and enjoyments and sufferings. Thus I

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could detach myself inwardly from my body and mind and attain the power of keeping the consciousness of this self brightly shining in the midst of all circumstances. In course of the few months I was at Mount Abu, I made considerable progress in meditation through day-and-night practice.

Sometime after that I fell ill, and as there was none to attend me I was forced to go to the hospital and put up there for a few days. I remember how we Sadhus suffer especially when we get ill. However, after passing 4 or 5 months at Mount Abu I went to Ahmedabad.

At Ahmedabad I paid occasional visits to the blind Vedanti Swami and had many discussions with him. Here I came in contact with a rich man (Seth) named Tikamdás. He was noted for his charity, which claimed 50%. of his profit. He took me to his newly-built big sanitorium at Shahibág where I stopped for some time. He felt a deep love for me, and wanted me to live near him. He asked my permission to build me an Ashrama in the neighbourhood. I had great mind to confine myself to a room for ten years like Prabhu Jagat Bandhu*. I took Tikamdas in my confidence and

* Prabhu Jagatbandhu was a Vaisnava Saint of East Bengal. He had his Ashrama in the Suburb of Faridpur town, where he shut himself up in a cottage, for about 17 years and kept no contact with the outside world and even with his disciples. Food was supplied to him from outside by the disciples and he partook of it whenever it suited him. He is highly respected by the people of Bengal and has a large number of admirers in the country.

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told him of my desire to bury myself in solitude. He was only too willing to fulfil my wishes. "Please choose your place" he offered eagerly, "and I will fix it up nicely for you." With a view to select a suitable site and pass some days in the famous Girnar-mountain, I went to Junágad, which is at a distance of a few miles from Girnar. I examined a number of places in the jungle of Junagad, but none quite suited my purpose. Then I went up the Girnar-hill and put up in a solitary cave for several days. The rains had set in and malaria got me pretty quick. I was forced to come down to Junagad and stay there for four months to recoup my health, ruined by the ravages of malaria. An old gentleman (Bulakidas, Asst. Revenue Officer) lodged and nursed me with all the tender care he lavished on his own child. When he and his wife burst into tears at the moment of parting I too was deeply moved. However, the fever off, I went to Pravás Pattan and stopped there at Sankar Math. Here again I got fever and was forced to leave the Math, because there was no proper arrangement for medicine and treatment there. Then the doors of a Jaini gentleman (S. D. O.) opened to receive me and he was good enough to extend to me every facility for treatment and attendance. One Jaina Sadhu used to visit the house. From him I learnt for the first time many things about Jainism. Elated at my earnestness for learning the principles of his creed, he said to my host's wife that he would get me initiated into Jainism. However, I left for the Nerbudda-side after a few days and stopped at Broach for some time. Chhotelal Shrooff of Petlad now took me

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to Nadiad to meet Muni Narayan, a good scholar and famous lecturer. I had long and interesting discussion with him on Vedanta.

At Petlad I met the famous scholar, Rameshwar Dutt Brahmachari, the Hindi translator of Adwaita Siddhi. Though a noted Vedanti, his real concern was the attainment of *Siddhi* (occult powers) through *Tantra – mantra* (performance of Tantric rites). He had a thorough knowledge of all systems of philosophy. I had some discussions with him on Vedantic doctrines, which he refuted very ably. Driven at bay, I fell back upon intuition which also he refuted. I cannot recollect any of his arguments now. This is chiefly due to the fact that at that time my conviction about the infallibility of the Vedantic doctrines and the falsity of all contrary views was so deep-rooted that I could not attach due importance and give serious consideration to the arguments which others might advance for the refutation of the established truths of Vedanta. Hence the erudite Brahmachari's arguments left little impression upon my mind. I only remember that I could not meet the arguments he hurled at me fairly and squarely and was defeated in the controversy. But though vanquished, I was not prepared to accept his conclusion as true and the Vedantic view as fallacious. So I licked my wounds and consoled myself with finding fault with Brahmachari's personality. That is the time-honoured salve for hurt pride, is it not? When I remember all this now I wonder at my obstinacy and blindness.

I returned to Ahmedabad and accompanied by

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Tikamdas, went to Mt. Abut to select a site where I might stay for 10 years as *Mauni* (observing the vow of silence.) After a good deal of search we found out *Mauni – gufa'*, a very lonely cave in a dense forest abounding with wild animals. It was so utterly lonely that I did not feel any necessity of having it surrounded by walls as a measure against intrusions of men. I got it repaired and had doors and windows put in to ensure safety and proper ventilation. The famous Seth Jugalkishore Birla of Calcutta now came there. He requested me to accept his money to meet the necessary expense of repairing the cave and invited me to go to him in future. However for the purpose of practising deep meditation without any disturbance from outside, I confined myself to the Mauni-gufa and took the vow of silence. I had to accept the services of three servants. One supplied milk and drinking water early in the morning, another carried mid-day meals at 1 P. M. from a distance of about a mile and a half and a third to keep an eye on the two. This spelled dependence and loss of long-cherished liberty, but it could not be helped. Necessity compelled me. The almost continuous practice of deep meditation rendered it unavoidable. Arrangement for the regular supply of suitable food and drink was essential to such practice. Relief from physical wants as well as sense of safety and security was of great help in freeding the mind from anxiety and outwardness. After taking the vow of silence, I had to write out my directions to the employees and tell them what I wanted, but this only for a short time. Presently they grew accustomed to my

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mode of life, could anticipate my wants which were of course very few and learnt to do their duties at the right time and in the right way. Then ave up the habit of writing and tried to become a *Mauni*, (a silent thinker) in the strict sense of the term. But though I gave up intercourse with other people, my *Mauna* was not yet complete,—internally I was not a Mauni, the effervescence of thought had not been stilled. As an aid to contemplation as well as a step expedient for relieving pressure upon the brain and the nerves, I used to read *Yoga-Vasistha* (in Sanskrit) with its commentary at intervals and recite its sweetest and most significant *slokas* in a loud voice. When the mind grew more concentrated and acquired the capacity for prolonged contemplation, I gave up reading and reciting and devoted myself more and more deeply to the practice of *Pratya'ha'ra*, *Dha'rana'*, *Dhya'na*, *and Sama'dhi*.

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CHAPTER XVI

The Sense of Truth-Realisation at Mount Abu

Let me here try to give the inquisitive reader a clearer idea of the nature of the self-discipline in which I engaged myself for the purpose of Truth-realisation. *Pratya'ha'ra*, *Dha'rana'*, *Dhya'na* and *Sama'dhi* constitute the esoteric *Su'dhana'* of all classes of sincere spiritual aspirants, whatever may be their conceptions about the ultimate Reality and the highest object of spiritual quest. *Pratyahara* means the withdrawal of the mind from all objects other than the object of contemplation—other than what is conceived to be ultimate realisable Truth. *Dharana* consists in fixing the attention exclusively upon the object of quest or the Truth as conceived and attempting to make the concept as vivid and living as to appear as a direct percept. When *Dharana* becomes relatively continuous like a stream of oil and the mind becomes in some measure identified with the object,—when the mental current flows in a straight course, free from all waves and impurities and divertions, with the object of contemplation vividly reflected upon it—it is promoted to the status of *Dhyana*. When *Dhyana* fulfils itself, it ascends to the state of *Samadhi*. When *Dhyana* or meditation becomes so deep that the mind is wholly absorbed in the consciousness of the object, when the mental flow is practically suspended for the time being and the subject and the object become as if unified, when there is in consciousness

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nothing to differentiate the contemplating mind from the object of its contemplation; it is called *Samadhi* or trance.

This *Samadhi* may, broadly speaking, pass through two stages. In one stage, the object is most vividly realised in the consciousness. At this stage though the contemplator is not distinctly conscious of himself or his ego as differentiated from the object of his contemplation, since the object pervades and absorbs his whole being, still there remains a subtle duality in the consciousness, a subtle distinction between the subject and its object, a transparent existence of the ego as distinguished from the object which it finds pervading its whole being, otherwise what is called realisation or intuition of the object would not have been possible This is known as *Samprajna'ta Sama'dhi*. What is generally known as *Aparoksha'nubhuti* or *Tattwa-sa'ksha'tka'ra* or Truth-realisation can possibly belong to this stage of *Samadhi*. At another stage, the contemplating mind is entirely lost in the object of its contemplation, the individuality of the ego completely disappears, no trace of any distinction between the subject and the object remains in the consciousness, and hence it cannot be called consciousness at all in the empirical sense of the term. At this stage no experience or intuition is possible. The perfect oneness of the subject and the object means a perfect void from the standpoint of experience. But still this is regarded as the ultimate goal of contemplative life. To make this stage steady and permanent is the highest ambition of those spiritual aspirants who devote themselves to the practice

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of systematic contemplation and meditation. This is called *Asamprajna'ta Samadhi.*

I have observed that the practice of *Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana* and *Samaddi* is essential for ascending to the highest stage of spiritual self-discipline, whatever may be the conception about the ultimate Reality and the highest goal of life and whatever may be the process of *Sadhana* adopted by the aspirant. Those who hold that God is the one supreme self-existent and self-conscious Person,—the Creator, Sustainer, Ruler and Destroyer of all relative conditional finite existences,—and who maintain that perfect self-surrender to and loving union with Him is the highest ideal of all spiritual endeavours, must withdraw their mind from all objects other than this Supreme One, must concentrate their attention upon Him and Him alone, must make systematic efforts to be deeply and permanently absorbed in the thought of the Beloved Lord and ultimately to lose their individuality in Him and attain eternal union with Him. They may adopt some chosen *Name* or chosen *Form* or both to represent their conception of God and this may help them in the practice of contemplation and meditation. The emotions of love and reverence and admiration which they seek to rouse in their minds through the contemplation of His supremely glorious character, His wonderful acts of creation and government of the world, His supposed works of mercy and love, are regarded as of great help to them in the attempt at concentration of their attention upon this Supreme object of their quest.

Those who deny God altogether, recognise no

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ultimate noumenal Reality behind and beyond this phenomenal universe and aim at getting rid of all kinds of sorrow and bondage by getting rid of existence itself and the will to live and enjoy, do also emphasise the necessity of practising this four-fold esoteric *sadhana*. They have to withdraw their mind from all temporal existences and fix their attention upon the Void or Nothingness. Through prolonged practice they seek to merge their individual consciousness in the Void.

Those who think that the individual self is ultimately a pure noumenal self-luminous spirit (*Purusha*), without any attribute or change, without any enjoyment or suffering, above all temporal and spatial relations, and absolutely distinct from the body and the senses, the mind, the ego and the intelligence, which together with the objective world are evolved from one ever-modifying *Prakriti*, and who without any reference to any Divine Being regard the realisation of the true character of the Self as the ultimate ideal of spiritual life, have likewise to practise the above four-fold *Sadhana*. They have progressively to withdraw their attention from the external objects, from the body and the senses, from the mental functions and the egoistic consciousness, and even from the universal phenomenal consciousness. They have to imagine themselves as the true changeless attributeless infinite and eternal Self, fix their attention upon it and ultimately lose themselves in the pure, calm and tranquil consciousness of this Self.

In this way all systems of religion emphasise the necessity for such systematic self-discipline, especially for those who aspire after reaching the highest end of

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spiritual culture, irrespective of their specific doctrines or dogmas.

Now since my sojourn at Rishikesh I was under the spell of Vedanta and devoted myself to the practice of *Pratyahara*, *Dharana*, *Dhyana* and *Samadhi* according to the Vedantic traditions. Before I came in contact with the erudite Vedantist Sadhus of Rikhikesh and was initiated into the study of the scholastic Vedantic treatises, I had been a *Bhakta* with implicit faith in and intense love and reverence for Personal God. I had also been a believer in the Divinity of the sacred images of gods and goddesses and in the Divinity of the Guru. I had been devoted to the practice of *Japa* of the Divine Name or the Sacred Mantra with which the Guru initiated me and intense and continuous contemplation upon the Divine Personality signified by the Name of Mantra. My mind would be filled with joy and love and admiration and reverence at the thought of the glorious attributes of the Deity. I would bow down with sincere faith and veneration before the visible representations of the Deity in the forms of sacred Images. I would be inspired with a sense of the holiness of the atmosphere of the *Tirthas*. I would try to withdraw my mind from all objects of senses and from all thoughts other than that of the Supreme One I had chosen as the object of my worship. I would make serious attempts to put my life in tune with the Divine Life as I had conceived it. I would endeavour to make my thought of the Divine as continuous as possible, this thought being sometimes accompanied by the mental picture of Siva or Guru.

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Now, with my initiation into the teachings of Vedanta, there was a great revolution in my mental atmosphere. My entire outlook underwent a thorough change. Vedanta taught me that the Ultimate Reality, Brahman, is not a Personal God with various glorious attributes and with the absolute power of creating, ruling and destroying the phenomenal world, but that It is one non-dual attributeless powerless changeless self-existent and self-luminous impersonal Consciousness. It also taught me that this Ultimate Reality is not a real Cause of this diversified world of countless orders of conscious and unconscious finite and temporal beings, but that this world of plurality is a false show superimposed upon the non-dual Ultimate Reality by a neither-real-nor-unreal inexplicable Power called Máyá, which, though having no existence apart from the existence of the Reality, transforms itself eternally into this wonderful illusory show upon the Reality as its substratum. Epistemologically considered, this Maya is nothing but Ignorance,—Ignorance about the true character of the Ultimate Reality. This Ignorance, which has no beginning, veils the self-luminous non-dual changeless character of Brahman and makes It appear as a plurality of finite Jivas and an objective world of finite material things. This being so, my consciousness of myself as a particular *Jiva* related to and struggling with so many other *Jivas* and physical forces and objects must be due to this Ignorance. I got the light that I am in truth Brahman and nothing but Brahman, and as such I am really eternal and infinite, without any limitation or bondage or sorrow, without any unachieved

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end or object to attain and without any duty to perform. It is through Ignorance of my true character that I falsely think of myself as a finite *Jiva* subject to enjoyments and sufferings, limitations and bondages. My *Sadhana* then should consist in nothing but getting rid of this Ignorance, and Ignorance can be got rid of through knowledge and knowledge alone. Ignorance, being not a real entity, need not be driven out by any active struggle. As soon as knowledge appears, Ignorance disappears as a matter of course. In order, therefore, to emancipate myself from all the miseries of mundane life, all the weaknesses and bondages and restrictions which I actually feel, I have nothing to do, except to know myself truly. Hence I must devote myself wholly and solely to the culture of true knowledge,—i. e. knowledge of my absolute identity with the changeless attributeless impersonal non-dual Brahman and I must wholly detach myself from the apparent relations with this illusory world.

When this conception of the self and the world and the ultimate Reality took possession of my intellect, I could no longer devote myself to the loving worship of Personal God or pay any homage to the plurality of Deities. As I myself am Brahman, the sole Reality, whom should I worship and why? Just as my conception of myself as an embodied finite personal being related to and conditioned by the world-system is false, due to Ignorance, so my conception of Brahman also as a supreme personal Being, embodied or unembodied, with eternally perfect knowledge and infinite creative and governing power, with justice, love and mercy for

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the creatures, is equally false, due to Ignorance. Personality has no meaning except with reference to the world of finite creatures. His knowledge and power, His justice, love and mercy, His creation, preservation and destruction, are all meaningless except in relation to this diversified universe. This world being false, the finitude of the selves being false, the personality of Brahman, His knowledge, power, etc. must necessarily be false. Personal God is really nothing but the one attributeless changeless differenceless self-luminous Impersonal Brahman *misconceived* as the omnipotent omniscient self-conscious and self-modifying creator, governor and destroyer of this illusory world-system due to the operation of the inexplicable principle of Maya or Ignorance, which is the source of all plurality and relativity. Such a false God cannot really confer any blessings upon me, cannot emancipate me from Ignorance and give me true knowledge of the real Self of myself and the universe. A God, who is Himself the product of Ignorance cannot possibly be the destroyer of Ignorance. Why then should I waste my energy in offering worship and prayer to and meditating on the illusory glories of such a God ? I must devote my whole time and energy to the contemplation of the true transcendent character of my Self for the purpose of attaining direct knowledge of my infinite eternal differenceless self-luminous impersonal absolute nature. Thus there was a complete change in my outlook on the process of Sádhaná or self-discipline. The religious sentiments of awe, wonder, admiration, love, reverence, etc., which I had so earnestly cultivated with the worship of Personal

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God and meditation on His eternally and infinitely glorious character, now appeared useless and ridiculous to me. I tried to shake off all kinds of sentimentalism and to engage myself calmly and quietly in the acquisition of true self-knowledge.

When the idea of Personal God was expelled from my mind, it is needless to add that the idea of the plurality of gods and goddesses had no place in it. They were driven off from my mind as the fictions of the imaginations of ignorant people. Henceforward they failed to rouse any feelings of admiration and reverence in my heart. The material images of gods and goddesses, which had in my earlier life been to me, as to the pious orthodox Hindus in general, so many visible and tangible embodiments of the Divine,—enlivened by the Spirit of Personal God, though differing in names and forms—were now to my vedantic eyes nothing more than stocks and stones shaped into peculiar forms by the craftsmen and deified by the superstitious folks. I could no longer bow down to them with sincere faith and reverence. I was further convinced that even if Personal God and the plurality of His self-manifestations as gods and goddesses were phenomenal realities like my own empirical self and even if the material images were on this plane of phenomenal realities divinized by the Spirit of God or the Deities, they were useless to me for the destruction of my ignorance and my attainment of the true knowledge of the Absolute Reality, the non-dual Brahman, Who is the Truth of myself, the Truth of all so-called finite spirits, the Truth of God and the Deities, the Truth of all

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phenomenal realities. All these supposedly phenomenal Personalities, however glorious they might be, must be under the veil of Ignorance, for otherwise they could not have any consciousness of their personal existence and any sense of their separateness from and superiority to the men and the other creatures and the material objects of the world. How could they, being themselves products of and victims to illusion, bestow the light of true knowledge upon the seekers of the Absolute Truth ?

Thus with my vedantic conception of Reality I could no longer sincerely sympathise with the popular Religion and even with the Religion of the *Bhaktas* of the higher orders. To me all but Impersonal Brahman were illusions like the rope-snake and the shell-silver and the dream-visions. I must, I decided, withdraw my attention from all of them, show utter disregard toward all of them, whether natural or supernatural, forsake them all as false and illusory, and make my consciousness saturated with the idea of Impersonal Brahman so as to realise perfectly my complete identity with It.

When thus determined upon pursuing the Vedantic course of *Sadhana* for the direct realisation of the identity of my Self with *Nirguna Brahman* and for the complete emancipation of myself from the apparent relationship with the illusory world, I was troubled by one doubt. I was initiated into the path of spirituality by a Guru, for whose personality I had the highest regard and the deepest love, and who was universally recognised in the circle of *Sadhus* as a *Siddha-maha'-purusha*,—as a super-man who had realised the Supreme

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Truth through a long and systematic course of esoteric *Sadhana*. But he did not give me any instruction about the Vedantic Truth and the Vedantic Sadhana. He gave a Mantra which contained Divine Names having reference to Personal God. He gave me also a mystic formula, the significance of which I was instructed to remember and contemplate; but I could not clearly understand its meaning. He instructed me to look upon all the apparently diverse gods and goddesses as identical in essence, though differing in names and forms, and to show due respect to the popular religion of the Hindus as well as of all other religious communities. From the general trend of his instruction I inferred that God-realisation was the ultimate end of life, and for that purpose intense love of and devotion to God, continuous remembrance of and meditation on God, renunciation of the worldly interests for His sake and surrender of egoistic consciousness—of *me* and *mine*—to Him were the essential requisities. In his instruction I did not find the supreme Truth (as I now conceived it) that my self was identical with Brahman, that the world was false and had only an illusory and apparent existence, and that Personal God (with all His manifestations as gods and goddesses) had also an illusory and apparent existence like the world He ruled over and was the product of Ignorance.

In his A'shrama-life also I observed that though he did not seem to have any attachement to or attraction for anything, though he was almost always in a meditative mood and had his eyes inwardly directed, though he always appeared to be mentally dwelling in

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some far-off region of perfect calmness and tranquillity, still he did not outwardly show any disregard or neglect to the ritualistic practices of the sect, he did not give up the sectarian symbols, such as *Kundals, Shelli* and *Na'da,* he actually took part in the ceremonial worship of the presiding Deity of the Ashrama, he encouraged the singing of religious songs in glorification of the gods and goddesses, and so on. All these had meanings to me till I obtained the vedantic light. But now they became altogether meaningless to me from the spiritual point of view. It was difficult for me now to reconcile Truth-realisation with participation in these meaningless affairs. Was it not insincerity on the part of a Truth-knower to take part in or even to encourage these religious ceremonies, which were based on utter Ignorance ? How could a man, who had realised Impersonal Brahman as His own true Self and the true Self of the universe, offer any worship to and sing the glories of God or Gods ? It became a puzzle to me. But I observed this compromise between true knowledge and false popular religion not only in the case of my Guru, but also in the case of many vedantist saints of Rishikesh and other places, for the spiritual insight of some of whom I had the highest regard.

My Guru, however, was not a philosophical scholar. He did not proclaim any philosophical views in preference to other views. He would not speak of his own spiritual experiences to anybody, even to his inquisitive disciples and admirers. It was therefore very difficult to understand his inner mind. He was found to give instruction to his disciples in accordance with their

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tastes and deep-rootod dispositions. From the method of his teaching one might conclude that spiritual advancement did not so much depend upon the metaphysical doctrines or religious dogmas accepted by the *sadhakas* as upon moral self-discipline, non-attachment to petty worldly interests, absence of bigotry and narrowness and earnest pursuit of what they might sincerely believe to be the Truth.

I sincerely believed that Ultimate Truth lay in the Vedantic conception of Brahman, the Self and the World and that it would be hypocrisy on my part to continue the old method of self-discipline, consisting principally in *Japa* of the Divine Name, cultivation of love and reverence for and self-surrender to Personal God and meditation on His all-knowing, all-doing, all-loving all-comprehending personal character. I thought that the approval of my Guru should be obtained for the change in the mode of my *sadhana*, and I was sure that he would give it, since what he liked most was sincerity and earnestness on the part of the spiritual aspirant.

Happily when my mind was undergoing this transformation, Babaji was alive in his physica body. I took the earliest opportunity to meet him and most briefly presented my case to him. Babaji did not seem to be at all taken by surprise. In his usual calm and tranquil and unconcerned manner, he said that there was no need for me to continue *Japa* and the cultivation of Bhakti and that I should devote myself solely to the Vedantic Sadhana of Jnana. I gave up *Japa* and the mental worship of Personal God. I was not a

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man of such a temperament, as could make any compromise between what I conceived as true and what I believed to be false. I found that many intelligent and saintly persons—many whom I considered far greater than myself—spoke of the highest Vedantic Truth, established it earnestly with unassailable arguments, strongly and enthusiastically refuted the views of the dualistic and semi-dualistic schools and appeared to be practising contemplation and meditation in accordance with the non-dualistic ideal; but at the same time they offered worship to gods and goddesses, followed the practices based on dualism and pluralism, pampered the tastes of the ignorant people and accommodated themselves with the current opinions which were incompatible with theirs. This seemed to me gross and unjustifiable inconsistency. My temper would not allow me to adopt such a course. I was goaded from within to be thorough-going in whatever views I accepted. It is this temper which alienated from me a great many friends and well-wishers. But there was no help for it.

However, inspired by the Vedantic ideal I bade good-bye to all friends and sought favourable circumstances for living immersed in deep contemplation and meditation. It is with such a mind that I came to Mount Abu, got the opportunity and resolved upon utilising it to the fullest extent.

At the Mauni Gufa of Mount Abu I cut off all connections with the external world, except in the matter of taking food and drink from the servants engaged for the purpose of supplying them. I adopted the vow of silence and gradually intensified it by giving

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up the practice of writing, giving hints through gestures, reading books and chanting hymns. I now lived only in the domain of thought. I devoted myself wholly and solely to the culture of *Pratyahara*, *Dharana*, *Dhyana* and *Samadhi*, having in view the direct and unobstructed realisation of the perfect identity of my Self with the changeless and differenceless, infinite and eternal, self-existent and self-luminous non-dual Brahman.

The more deeply I sought to free my consciousness from the thoughts and desires about the finite and transitory mundane objects, gross and subtle, and to identify it with the pure infinite and eternal Existence-Consciousness, the more bitterly I felt how huge and difficult the task was. When intellectually I had been convinced that the phenomenal world of mind and matter was an illusory product of Maya and that I was really identical with Brahman, I had no proper estimate of the strong hold which this false world had upon me. I had not felt it so very difficult for me to renounce my comfortable home, to sever the natural ties of affection with my parents and brothers and sisters, to live alone and helpless in the miserable huts or wild forests or insect-infested mountain-caves. I could easily shake off all physical connections with the outer world. But when I sought to dive deep into my own inner consciousness, I found to my great amazement and utter discomfiture that this false world of diversities had already consolidated its empire there. What frightened me most was the bitter experience that the diversities within the consciousness it was immensely more difficult to drive out and get rid of than the diversities

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of the external world. It required a far stronger determination and a far more strenuous and prolonged practice to get free from the diversities of thoughts, desires and feelings which were holding possession of the consciousness for an indefinite period.

With ever-renewed determination and undaunted perseverence I began to practise *Pratyahara* and *Dharana* and struggled with the varieties of thoughts, desires and emotions that raised their heads like so many turbulent rebels within my mind. Many of them had relations to objects of gross sensuous experience, while there were many whose origin I could never trace in my past experience. I had been a *Brahmacha'rin* all my life and shunned the company of girls and women from my early boyhood. But at the present stage, after so much *Sadhana*, my mind was sometimes disturbed by thoughts about women and sexual passions. In my normal waking states I never cherished any ambition for name and fame—any aspiration other than that of Truth-realisation and perfect holiness. But when in a contemplative mood, I was sometimes disturbed by thoughts about and desires for objects of worldly ambition. While I was deeply immersed in the enjoyment of a calm and serene state of my consciousness or in the contemplation of the transcendent character of my Self, I was sometimes struck with surprise to find that the concentrated state of the mind had somehow slipped away and the mind was almost unconsciously thinking of some worldly phenomena. I wondered how such a variety of thoughts, desires and passions could be lurking in my mind. I had been rather proud of the purity

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of my life, the purity of my thoughts, speeches and actions, the purity of my desires and sentiments. My pride was humbled. I remember how on many days I fought against my wild and unruly thoughts, desires and passions from early morning to midnight and failed to subdue them. Sometimes a sense of despair would sweep away the strength of my determination. But next morning I would again take a fresh resolution and begin to struggle. Sometimes I could check these rebels only for a short period. Whatever success I could attain, would inspire me with hope and infuse new strength into my heart for fresh struggle.

In order to get rid of these disturbing elements and to concentrate my attention upon the object of my pursuit, I had recourse to several contrivances. One of the effective processes I adopted was what is known as *Na'da'nusandha'na*. I would utter Om-m-m in a sonorous voice and continue the same monotonous sound as long as breath allowed. This was repeated again and again. Attention was fixed upon the sweet sound. The mental thought was made to flow in a calm and unruffled and unified stream in tune with this monotonous sound. I found it very efficacious in putting down the rebellious thoughts, desires and emotions and in making the mind calm and serene and one-pointed.

For sometime I adopted another process, namely, Vichára, (reflection) along with Dhyána. The process essentially consisted in deeply thinking that all the objects, gross or subtle, external or internal, towards which the diverse thoughts, desires and emotions were

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directed, originated from, existed in, were illumined and revealed by and were therefore substantially nothing but Brahman. Thus attempts should be made to realise Brahman in all the objects of all the functions of the mind. When thoughts or desires about gross worldly objects would trouble my mind, I would try to contemplate that these objects had no existence apart from that of their causes, which were subtle mental modifications. Thus I would attempt to check the thoughts and desires about gross worldly things and confine them to the subtle (*sukshma*) psychical realities. Then I would reflect that these subtle psychical realities also were the diversified manifestations of one undifferentiated unmanifested inexplicable Ignorance and had no existence independent of that Ignorance. Thus I would repeatedly impress upon my mind the falsity of all the objects of my diverse thoughts and desires and emotions and the falsity of the thoughts, desires and emotions themselves. Then I would think that all these appearances, these modifications of Ignorance, external as well as internal, objective as well as subjective, were floating on one eternal infinite changeless differenceless self-luminous Substratum, Brahman. It was by the existence of Brahman that they appeared to be existent; it was by the self-luminosity or self-consciousness of Brahman that they appeared to be revealed and illumined. I would try to concentrate my attention on Brahman and to merge all the thoughts, desires and emotions in this one thought, viz., thought of Brahman.

Sometimes I would put the process of my reflection and meditation into the form of what passes by the

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name of *Omkara Upasana* among the Vedantic Sadhus. *Om* is a mystic sound-symbol accepted by the Vedantists and the Hindus in general for representing Brahman. It is imagined to have a transcendent or Nirguna aspect and a phenomenal or Saguna aspect. In its Saguna aspect it is supposed to represent the total phenomenal reality consisting of three phases viz. causal, subtle or ideal and gross or physical. In each of these phases it has a subjective and an objective aspect and an individual and collective aspect. Accordingly, the sound *OM* is analysed into three constituent sounds viz. अ (A), उ (U) and म् (M). Here अ represents the gross aspect of the total phenomenal reality. Subjectively and individually it implies the Self as identified with the physical body and the sense-organs; objectively it implies the world of gross physical phenomena with which the body and the sense-organs are in contact and in which we habitually live and move in the waking state of our consciousness. Collectively it implies Brahman as apparently embodied in this world of gross subjective and objective phenomena;—Brahman conceived as so qualified is called *Virat*. The second syllable of the sound viz. उ (U) represents subjectively the self as identified with the subtle body or mind (with its sense-powers) and objectively the world of subtle or ideal phenomenal realities—the world in which we habitually dwell in the dream-state of our consciousness as well as in the states of reverie, imagination etc. Collectively, it stands for Brahman as apparently qualified by this world of subtle subjective and objective phenomena. Brahman as so qualified is spoken of by the Vedantists by the

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name of Hiranyagarbha. The third syllable म् M is conceived as representing the causal body (which, according to Vedantic conclusion, is inexplicable positive Ignorance), in which the ego is merged and all distinct consciousness based upon subject–object–relation disappears, and from which the ego and the distinct consciousness make their appearance. This is the body which is experienced in the state of deep sleep and a subtle remembrance of which remains in the normal waking state of consciousness that follow it, (in the form "I did not know anything"). In this causal body, there being no distinct consciousness or phenomenal knowledge, there is no differentiation between the subjective and objective aspects. In the collective aspect, म् M represents Brahman as apparently qualified or conditioned by Maya or Cosmic Ignorance which is the ultimate material cause of all the diversities of the subtle as well as of the gross worlds. As so qualified Brahman is called *Iswara*.

Now, all these bodies,—causal, subtle and gross,—being of the nature of illusory appearances, the true Self really transcends them all and is by itself a differenceless unconditioned self-luminous Reality, and there is absolutely no distinction between the Self which appears as individual with reference to the illusory bodies and Brahman which also appears illusorily as Iswara, Hiranyagarbha and Virat with reference to the different kinds of illusory collective bodies. *Om* in its ultimate transcendental significance is conceived as indicating this Nirguna Brahman or *Atman* (Self).

Now, when meditation takes the form of deep

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reflection upon the meaning of *Om* it becomes a progressive approach from its gross meaning to its innermost transcendental significance. अ, which is the symbol for the gross world, the gross bodily ego and Virat, has to be merged in उ which represents the subtle or ideal world, the subtle mental ego and Hiranyagarbha. Thus the physical world in which my mind has been accustomed to live and move, being known to be a gross manifestation of the subtle ideal world, and as such derived from, dependent upon, and substantially non-different from the latter, all ideas about all kinds of physical objects have to be driven out in meditation from the consciousness, so that the consciousness may have its being purely in the ideal world. The Self being relieved from the consciousness of its identity with the physical body and its relation to the gross physical world enjoys a sort of freedom from the gross limitations which such identification and relation involved. But even at this stage the self being identified with the mind and related to the subtle world it cannot feel at ease with itself. Then the attempt is made to merge the mind and the subtle world in the cosmic Ignorance of which they are the effects and from which therefore they are essentially non-different. Thus which represents the identification of the self with the subtle body related to the subtle mind is merged in deep meditation in म् M which represents the unmanifested undiversified causal nature of the Cosmic Ignorance. At this stage the *Sadhaka* neither feels himself related to the gross objective world nor feels any desires or thoughts or emotions within himself. But

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still the Sadhaka has not yet reached the goal of his meditation. The transcendent nature of the self is even at this stage veiled by Ignorance and hence a difference remains between the individual self and Iswara. The Sadhaka therefore has to make a further attempt in the deepest meditation to get rid of or destroy this Ignorance. This Ignorance is nothing but a veiling power inexplicably associated with the transcendent Self which is essentially neither individual nor collective and which is above all subject-object relations. This Ignorance has no independent existence of its own and in truth cannot be called either existent or non-existent, but it appears as existent by the existence of the self-luminous self or Brahman whose essential differenceless character it veils. In order to get rid of this Ignorance the Sadhaka has to meditate deeply on the essential subject-objectless differenceless (अखण्ड) self-luminous (स्वप्रकाश) character of the Self or Brahman and to become perfectly identified with It. Ignorance being of the nature of a veil (upon Brahman), by virtue of which the undivided consciousness appears in divided forms, has to be destroyed by the realisation of the absolutely undivided form of the consciousness by an effort of thought and will on the part of the Sadhaka. This is meditation on OM in its transcendent or Nirguna aspect, which is sometimes designated as अमात्र i. e. transcendent of all मात्रा or aspects. It should be noted that in the previous two stages the progress in meditation was of the nature of merging the effect in its cause, but in this last stage there is evidently no causal relation between Brahman and Ignorance and hence the

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process of merging is altogether of a distinct nature. In the previous two cases the Sadhaka emancipates his Self from the world of effects by merging it in or neglecting it as non-different from the cause, while in the last case he emancipates his Self from what is illusory or apparent by merging it in or realising its non-difference from what is really true. Brahman or the Absolute Self which is above all relativity and difference, which is the One without a second either within or outside of itself is the sole reality and the substratum of the inexplicable Ignorance, which is the mother of all illusions. When the differenceless conditionless self-luminous character of the substratum is realised through meditation the Ignorance vanishes, and Brahman or the transcendent Self shines alone in its non-dual self-luminosity.

I practised this form of contemplation and meditation for sometime, but I did not feel its practical efficacy to my satisfaction. I was more interested in the perfect concentration of my mind. The thoughts which are involved in the above process appeared to me rather as pulling obstacles in the way of the attainment of perfect calmness and tranquillity and the blissful state of the consciousness. The idea of the vast diversified objective world, the idea of the world of subtle realities, the idea of the ultimate material cause of the subtle and the gross worlds, the ideas of Virat, Hiranyagarbha and Iswara,—all such ideas do not spontaneously arise in the mind and hence they become no sources of troubles at the time of meditation. In the aforesaid method these ideas are

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required to be roused in the mind by the exercise of imagination and then they have to be vanquished or merged in the thought of One Infinite Differenceless Self-luminous Self or Brahman. This seemed to me an artificial process involving the creation of troubles and then making exertions for getting rid of them. I did not therefore like this process. I was inclined to give a direct fight to the thoughts, feelings and desires which actually arose in my mind and created troubles in the way of deep concentration.

In order to give such a direct fight to the thoughts, desires and passions and to put them down just as they made their appearance in my consciousness, I would always be on guard; I would constantly watch the mental states and processes and take care that no single thought or desire or passion might arise in the mind without my being immediately conscious of it; I would remain cautious that my mind might not be invaded by any such enemy at any moment of my self-forgetfulness. This constant alertness itself would stand in the way of the troublesome thoughts, desires and passions rising in the mind. They would as it were be afraid of facing the watchful eyes of the earnest *sadhaka*. When inspite of this caution any thought or desire or passion made its appearance on the mind, I would immediately try to catch hold of it and subdue it. Such watchfulness and bold fight seemed to be gradually weakening the mental propensities and keeping the mind calm and quiet for longer and longer periods. I would then sometimes concentrate my attention upon the serene and tranquil state of the mind

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and enjoy its sweetness and sometimes direct the attention to the changeless self-luminous witness-consciousness,—the self behing the mind.

Another process also was found to be very useful in establishing calmness and tranquillity in the mind and putting the finite individual consciousness in tune with the Infinite, Universal Consciousness. It was the practice of what is called *Ajapa'*, as mentioned before. It essentially consists in contemplating the union of *aham* (I-individual consciousness) and *sa* (He-Infinite Universal Consciousness) with every breath. Constant repetition of this process makes the consciousness of the union of the individual self and the Universal Self-of Atman and Brahman—more and more steady and clears off all the hostile cognitive, volitional and emotional processes which put a veil upon this consciousness. With the help of this process I could considerably advance in the path of concentration upon and self-identification with Brahman.

When the mental functions were brought considerably under the control of my will and concentration became to a great extent an easy process, the help of the *Pranava* or the *Ajapa* or the watchfulness referred to above appeared supefluous. Nay, attention to anything of the sort seemed to be a hindrance to perfect concentration, in as much as it meant a division of the attention between the Supreme Object of meditation and the extraneous help taken for the purpose of concentration of the consciousness upon this object. I would therefore in the deeper stages of meditation give up all such contrivances and fix my attention upon one

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all-pervading Universal Consciousness-Existence in which my ego or individual consciousness would be contemplated as wholly merged. I would think of myself as completely immersed, as it were, in one waveless currentless differenceless ocean of self-luminous Consciousness. I would attempt to realise this universal Consciousness as pervading the whole of my individual consciousness and myself as lost in It.

It may be noted in this connection that I found a fundamental difference between the form of concentration attained by means of any artificial physical or psychical process or by the help of any extraneous symbol and that attained through the practice of the suppression of the naturally arising thoughts, desires and passions and meditation on the essential nature of the Self or the Supreme Ideal of life. In the latter case, on account of the open challenge given to the normal operations of the mind which are standing obstacles in the way of concentration and the conscious direction of the whole mental energy towards the chosen spiritual Ideal, there is an inner transformation of character, which does not occur in any of the former type of processes. In the former case concentration may be attained,—and sometimes may even be more easily attained,—for the time being, but in such concentration the inner desires and propensities, though suppressed temporarily, are not considerably weakened within the mind, and hence when the state of concentration passes away the man rises as the same man, *i. e.* with the same desires and passions as before. In the latter case these desires and passions being consciously fought

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against and checked, they are weakened at their very source, and hence the Sadhaka rises from the state of concentration as a considerably changed man. Accordingly from the spiritual point of view this latter type of meditation I found to be much more efficacious and much more permanent in its results than the former type.

Now, seeing the enormity of the task I had undertaken, I strengthened my resolution and lengthened the period of *sadhana* every day. Sometimes I was disheartened, but again I shook off the despondency and took up arms for fighting. Sometimes after the whole day's hard struggle I would lie down flat in despair at dead of night on a huge rock under the starry sky. There was nobody to offer any consolation or give any encouragement. I had lost faith in the God of mercy and love and could not pray to any Power for help. After sleeping off my exhaustion for a short while, I would again rise up, drive out the sense of despair from the mind, take up fresh resolution to persevere to the end and start anew the struggle with the rebellious mind. The period of *sadhana* was lengthened to about 20 or 21 hours a day. There was no physical exercise and very little sleep. The mind was almost always engaged in struggle and found little rest or diversion. In this way I continued day in and day out.

After a good deal of hard struggle and systematic self-discipline in accordance with the most effective methods, I at last began to see the light. I began to experience the sweet tranquillity aud calmness so eagerly

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sought for and my mind became more and more deeply concentrated upon the object of my spiritual pursuit. First, the thoughts and desires and emotions, with reference to external objects of sensuous experience gradually died down. At the second stage, the subtle thoughts, desires and emotions, having no external reference, but still making the mind unsettled and unsteady and "veiling the face of Truth", began to fade away. At this stage, various internal experiences are obtained, which appear on the surface of the consciousness so vividly that they are not unoften accepted by the *sadhakas* as real spiritual visions or supernatural truths. The short-sighted *sadhakas* are sometimes so infatuated with these experiences that, instead of exerting themselves to rise above them for the realisation of the Ultimate Truth, they become contented with and proud of them. Such manifestations of the deep-rooted impressions and dispositions of the impure mind are more formidable obstacles than the grosser external experiences in the way of spiritual ascent to higher planes of consciousness, in as much as they often appear in the forms of spiritual visions and supernatural truths.

When the consciousness is occupied with internal experiences, the mind being withdrawn from the grosser objects of sense-perception, appears outwardly to be concentrated. The withdrawal of the attention from the outer world may sometimes be so complete that even the sounds of trumpets or thunders may not reach it and draw it out. But even at such a state the diversities of internal experiences or imaginations may disturb

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the mind. I remember to have had many such experiences in course of my strenuous practice. Some of the experiences were very sweet and charming, some awe-striking and interesting, some terrible and frightening. But when I came down to the normal waking state and reviewed those experiences, I was fully conscious that they were nothing but subjective disturbances, nothing but waves of the restless mind, nothing but appearances on the surface of the empirical consciousness of the deep-rooted subtle impressions lying hidden in the sub-conscious mind. They were dreams of the yogic mind. I girded up my loins to subdue and transcend them and to rise to the state of perfect calmness and tranquillity of consciousness.

After long continuous and persistent efforts I could get rid of them and taste the bliss of calm and tranquil consciousness. At first this state was momentary, but that momentary enjoyment also was very inspiring and strength-giving. Through repeated attempts the period of such calmness wavelessness and serenity of consciousness was gradually lengthened. At this stage the mind did not of course cease to function. The mental stream flowed on without any impurity, without any waves or ripples or bubbles, without any deviation from its straight course. The experience of this state essentially consisted in the enjoyment of the bliss of calmness. Though this state was the fulfilment of the most strenuous effort, no sense of effort was present in it. As the result of the most intense activity, the mind appeared to have reached a state of complete passivity. The state might be compared to the state of sound sleep,

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but for the ego's or mind's distinct awareness of itself and enjoyment of its blissful calmness in this state. On account of its being a state of apparent passivity, there was the danger of its easily passing into the state of sound sleep and being deprived of the awareness and enjoyment. Some sort of alertness or caution against sleep was therefore greatly needed at this stage.

From my previous intellectual training I was alive to the fact that the undisturbed calmness of the mind and enjoyment of its sweetness did not constitute Truth-realisation. This state of the mind was necessary for Truth-realisation, but was not Truth-realisation itself. It was a kind of Samádhi, no doubt. But *Samadhi* was not the same as what was called *Samadija Prajna'* (Truth-realisation to be attained through *Samadhi*). Truth is the identity of the individual self and the universal Self,—the identity of my self with the changeless differenceless infinite eternal self-luminous Brahman. This Truth has to be directly experienced. I began to concentrate my mind more and more deeply with this resolution at heart,—with the resolution that I must not allow my mind to be merged into an unconscious state of void or contentless unity, but that I must in that state of perfect tranquillity of consciousness realise the non-dual Brahman in myself. My attempt was at last crowned with success. The experience was peculiar. It required a balance as it were between duality and unity of consciousness. While there was duality, the veil between the self and Brahman remained,—there was difference between the finite and the Infinite, between the changing and the Eternal, between the

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subject and the object. If there were absolute unity of consciousness, the difference between consciousness and unconsciousness would vanish, consciousness would be dissolved into a state of voidness and there would be no experience or intuition or realisation. The state of realisation seemed to be á state of harmony between unity and difference, between ego and Brahman, between the finite and changing and the Infinite and Changeless. In this state the experiencing ego was not altogether absent, but it was so unified with Brahman that there was no consciousness of its separate existence as the seer or knower, the entire consciousness being pervaded by Brahman. There was a subtle sense of finitude, but this sense put no veil whatsoever upon the all-absorbing sense of infinity and eternity. Here there was no contradiction between finitude and infinitude, between time and eternity, between the knower and the known, between the seeker and the Truth. I realised myself as eternal and infinite, changeless and differenceless, self-existent and self-luminous non-dual Consciousness or Brahman. In the act of realisation there was no consciousness of myself as distinguished from Brahman, but the very fact that it was a state of realisation or experience might be construed as implying a sort of subtle difference between the self and Brahman. It was a state of unity in duality.

The state above referred to was what was described in the *yoga-sa'stra* as a *Samprajna'ta Sama'dhi*—trance with perfect knowledge,—trance in which Truth was realised. But with the deepening of this blissful consciousness of my unity with the Infinite Eternal Absolute

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Brahman, I sometimes attained a state in which there was no consciousness at all—not even this consciousness of unity. It was a state of perfect unity of consciousness, in which there was absolutely no difference between the subject and the object, between the ego and Brahman, and therefore no process of consciousness. I was not aware of anything whatsoever at this stage. When I arose from this state and came back to the plane of distinct consciousness, I could however distinguish this state from the state of deep sleep and the state of being merged in deep Ignorance. It was not, as far I could remember or infer afterwards, a state of the failing of consciousness, but a state of the fulfilment of consciousness, in which consciousness, having attained perfect unity with itself, rose above the distinction of subject, object and process, upon which individual awareness or knowledge depended. According to my previous training and disposition, I interpreted it to be a state in which I became absolutely one with the Infinite Brahman,—I became Truth itself. It was, I thought, what is known as *Asamprajna'ta Sama'dhi* or *Nirvikalpa Sama'dhi*. I attained this state on several occasions, though the period of its continuity was on no occasion very long. I could stay for longer periods in the state of self-realisation and self-enjoyment than in this transcendent state.

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CHAPTER XVII

A Terrible Headache Upsets The Plan

My programme was to continue my *sadhana* at the *Mauni Gufa* for a good many years. Practice of deep meditation without cessation for a long period is necessary for assimilating the realised Truth, for turning Truth-realisation into the normal nature of the *Sadhaka*, for saturating the entire being of the *Sadhaka* with the knowledge of the identity of the self with Brahman. The deep-rooted impression of the reality of the diversified world of ordinary experience and of the identification of the self with the body and the senses and the mind cannot be shaken off by the spiritual experience of Truth gained once or twice or several times in *Samadhi*. This experience has to be enjoyed again and again, and the memory of this experience has to be brought down through continued practice to the plane of normal empirical consciousness in order to root out or suppress the previous false impression and to exercise its governing influence upon all thoughts, feelings and actions. I had, as it was then my conviction, observed in the character of my Guru a living example of such a nature,—a nature almost wholly saturated with the knowledge of Truth and almost incessantly in communion with the Infinite and Eternal Self. I had this ideal in my mind. It was my earnest desire to be most deeply immersed in Truth and to realise the transcendent Truth in my normal consciousness. I was mentally prepared to continue the Sadhana as long as necessary for achieving this end.

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But this was not to be. After only one year's *sadhana*, in course of which I gained the aforesaid experiences, I was physically compelled to leave the Mauni Gufa of Mount Abu and to seek refuge elsewhere. The readers might have got some vague idea of the hard struggle through which my body and nervous system and mind had to pass during this period, the formidable obstacles which my nature itself presented in the way of my success and the vast amount of energy I had to spend for overcoming them. But they could not perhaps conceive how lengthened the days and nights were when I failed in my repeated attempts and suffered from despondency. The days and nights were of course shortened when I reached the state of calmness and tranquillity, saw the light of Truth and enjoyed the bliss of realisation. But these were preceded by a period of such strenuous exertions as told awfully upon my brain and nervous system. The life I lived during that period was abnormal. The mind was always active, but this was accompanied neither by necessary physical exercise nor by necessary sound sleep nor by proper diet. Before and after taking my meals, I would not generally take a moment's rest, but would be engaged in contemplation and meditation. The meal also would be taken in a meditative mood. Sometimes I would take short naps for an hour or two, and on many days and nights I would not have a wink of sleep. During the latter part of my *Sadhana*, I took up the vow not to lie down at all, but when extreme fatigue was felt, I would doze in the sitting posture. I passed many days and nights without coming out of

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the Gufa for a slight movement of the limbs or breathing of fresh air. All these were heavy taxes upon the brain. The strain was too much, when I was most fervently struggling for the suppression of the hostile thoughts, desires and feelings and was meeting with repeated failures.

I was attacked by a severe headache. It went on increasing in severity. It appeared to me that somebody was, as it were, striking me on the head with a big hammer. Sometimes it seemed that a sharp nail was being driven into my brain. When I lost myself in deep meditation, when the consciousness of my personal physical self was merged in the consciousness of one impersonal universal Self, I would for the time being feel no pain, but would on the contrary enjoy infinite bliss. But when the meditation relaxed and the consciousness came down to the normal plane, the pain would be unbearable. I made several experiments, but got no relief. My hope and desire for continuing the practice of deep meditation were frustrated. I had to abandon the previous resolution of staying in the *Gufa* for a decade or more and to seek after a remedy for the terrible brain-disease.

As I felt that the pain was not so acute in winter as in the hotter seasons, I thought that I might get some relief, if I removed to some colder region. Accordingly I resolved to go to Tibet and to reside there in the meditative mood for a number of years. I did not however like to break the vow of silence. I continued to be a *Mauni*, though I might not observe the vow as strictly as before.

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I left mount Abu (1919). At this time I thought it unnecessary to put on the black woollen thread with the small flute hanging from it, which had been given to me by my Guru at the time of my initiation into the life of a Sadhu and which I had to wear round my neck like a garland as a symbol of the Natha sect. I did not like to live exclusively as a member of any particular sect. From the very beginning I was against cherishing any sectarian mentality and conforming to any sectarian habits. But I had the highest admiration and reverence and love for my Guru as a perfectly self-realised person. I knew that he was inwardly above all sectarianism, above all narrowness and bigotry. But as he was the head of the Nath-Yogi sect and the manager of the Gorakhnath Temple, he had in his outer life to conform to the practices of the sect. By his temperament he was disinclined to do any violence to the customs and manners of the society, in the midst of which he lived, though these might have no importance to his inward eyes. It was in accordance with the practice of the sect that he gave me the garland of woollen thread and cut a lock of my hair at the time of my initiation into the mendicant life. He did not however insist on the splitting of my ears and the wearing of rings therein. When I took leave of him, he instructed me to live like a *Paramhansa*. Now, a *Paramhansa* was not under any religious obligation to carry on his person any sectarian symbol. To whatever sect he might belong, he might live like an ordinary Sannyasi without any specific dress of sign of his sect. By merely observing his appearance, no inference could be made with regard

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to his sect. This was in accord with my taste. But so long I wore the sectarian symbol, chiefly because my beloved Guru had given it to me with his own loving hand. It had some advantages also. I was a novice in the society of *Sadhus*. Into the *Ashramas* of *sadhus* or the *chattras* meant for Sadhus, I could easily introduce myself as a *bonafide* sadhu on the evidence of these sectarian symbols. For entering into any congreagation and for getting a piece of bread, a *sadhu* has on many occasions to face searching cross-examination. In several cases I felt that without the garland as my witness I would not have been able to persuade the people to believe that I was a disciple of Yogiráj Gambhirnath, and hence I would have had to go without food.

Now I felt somewhat confident that I might procure my daily bread without relying on the sectarian insignia and might therefore move about like a *Paramhansa*. It would not be going against the wishes of my Guru. Hence I parted with the woollen garland and the small flute and left Mount Abu as a badgeless mendicant. Of course I put on the coloured loin-cloth, which was the official costume of the Indian sadhus in general, and I had also a blanket for serving the purpose of a wrapper as well as a bedding.

As I had a mind to go to some far-off cold place, I thought it my duty to pay before my departure a short visit to the generous-hearted gentleman, who had done so much for providing me with all that I required for the incessant practice of deep meditation in such a lonely Gufa. Hence I went to Ahmedabad to meet him.

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But there the pain in my head became very severe. In order to rise to a plane of consciousness which the pain could not reach, I would try very quickly to be absorbed in deep meditation. But sometimes the severity of the pain would not allow me to lose myself in meditation, and at other times even if I could somehow concentrate the attention and transcend the consciousness of the physical body, I could not remain long in that state. As soon as the bodily consciousness returned, the pain would be terrible. With such a deceased state of the body, I was not allowed to take the risk of a long journey. The disease of the physical body required a physical treatment. I was accordingly placed under the treatment of some emminent physicians. This treatment gave me some relief. They expressed their considered opinion that the pain was not due to external heat, but due to that generated within the brain by excessive strain, and that the coldness of climate would not be of much help. In accordance with their opinion I abandoned the idea of going to Tibet. Feeling a little better, I went to the bank of the Narmadá and settled at Broach.

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CHAPTER XVIII

Treatment and Sadhana in Several Places

Whatever pain I might suffer, I could not give up meditation, for meditation was now my life. At Broach I used to pass almost the whole day in contemplation and meditation in a solitary spot of the river-bank near the cremation ground and the Railway bridge. When I felt hungry, I would go to Chunilál Banamáli Das's house and get food regularly. After staying there for some time, I went to Udaipur (Marwar). There I lived in a lonely jungle, at a distance of more than a mile from the extremity of the town. At night I used to enjoy a few hours of sleep on the open ground, with wild boars as my neighbours. At that time I used to cover my body with only one blanket. I had neither any piece of cloth nor any pair of shoes. One day while I was passing through the street, one old *Sadhu* catching hold of my blanket said to me in a pitiable tone, "Last night I have suffered much from exceesive cold,—kindly give me the blanket." I was moved by his pathetic words. But if I parted with the blanket, I would be stark naked and would not be able to go to any house for getting my food. Hence I tore my blanket into two halves and gave one half to the poor *sadhu*. At night I found that with the half portion of the blanket which I kept for myself, I could not cover my body. If I spread it on the ground, my body would be chilled by the cold blasts of wind. If I put it over the body, the cold surface of the ground would bite my

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back, I suffered terribly from cold, passed some sleepless nights and at last fell a victim to fever. This compelled me to take refuge in the hospital. After a few days one Brahmin, who used to prepare food for me in his house (usually so arranged by the authorities), removed me from the hospital and gave me shelter in a garden near his house. The fever did not forsake me. Sometimes it became very furious, the temperature rose very high, and all my bodily organs seemed to be tortured. I felt the urgent necessity of systematic treatment as well as efficient and tender nursing.

On that occasion as well as on several other occasions I became conscious of an inherent weakness of my character. I was from my boyhood regarded by those who knew me intimately as one equally strong in body and mind: I had a robust physique and also an indomitable mind. I had the courage to defy all dangers and difficulties. When I became a *Sanyasi* and got the vedantic light, I became all the more fearless. When my body was in normal health, my spirit also was undaunted. But whenever I fell a prey to any serious illness, my mind would become weak, my courage would fail, my spirit of independence and fearlessness and unconcernedness would forsake me. I would then become anxious for getting help from others. I would feel strongly the necessity for good treatment and good nursing. At such a time I would very much relish that somebody with a loving heart should sit by me, take proper care of me, supply me with proper medicine and diet and so on. I could not on such occasions rely on the mercy of God, because the merciful God of the

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Bhaktas was to me an illusory entity—a product of the imagination of the weak-minded sentimental people blinded and misguided by *Avidya*. Nor could I embrace the sufferings as the inevitable effects of my past *Karma*, as I had an inborn faith in *Purushakara*,—in the freedom of thought and action,—and in its power to build up or modify human destinies. The result was that I would exert myself independently as far as my energy allowed to overcome whatever difficulties presented themselves in my way, and when I felt my energy exhausted, I would seek for the help of other sympathetic and capable human beings. I should also mention that my sense of gratitude towards the persons, who might render the most ungrudging services to me and with whose help I might tide over any great difficulty, could never prevail upon me to adopt anything like a flattering attitude towards them, to bend down my will before theirs, or to sacrifice my opinions or to soften my language in giving expression to them in deference to their likes and dislikes. My temperament was always unbending. My vedantic conception of the self and the world as well as my spiritual experience in *Samadhi* could not remove the above-mentioned weakness of my nature or bring about a change in my temperament.

When at Udaipur I found that my fever was persistent, I began to consider what place would be most suitable for my systematic treatment and nursing. It struck me that at Benares my brother-disciple, Bramhchári Jajneswar (our beloved Jagá-dá) had established an *Ashrama* in the name of our Guruji and was conducting it with the monetary aid of Guruji's lay disciples.

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Jaga-da was a Bramhchari all his life. From his boyhood he was an earnest aspirant for spiritual advancement. Before his taking refuge at the feet of Babaji, he had learnt some *Yogic* practice and made some progress in that direction. But he was not a man of strong physique. On receiving instruction from Babaji, he gave up the yogic practices and devoted himself to *Japa, Vichara* and *Dhyana*. He was an expert *Sevaka*, and he rendered bodily services with great devotion to Babaji during the last few years of his physical existence. After Babaji's *Maha'samā'dhi*, he in accordance with the wishes of some other fellow-disciples removed some of the articles used by Babaji to Benares and established an *A'shrama* at the Ashighat. Upto the last day of his bodily life he was engaged in Guru-seva at this ashrama.

I thought that under the affectionate care of Jaga-da I should get good treatment and nursing. Accordingly I left for Benares. Jaga-da received me very cordially and arranged for my treatment. He did whatever was possible for him in that poor *Ashrama* to give me comfort and restore my normal health. I recovered from the fever and got back my bodily strength. But the chronic headache did not leave me. My friends insisted on placing me under the treatment of some eminent A'yurvedic physician of Bengal. Accordingly I was taken to Rájsháhi and put under the care of the renowned Kaviráj Hárán Chandra Chakravarti. Having examined me carefully for a few days, he made the observation that if I continued deep meditation, the disease would not be cured and I would turn blind in course of time.

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I was then a *mauni*, so far as oral conversation was concerned. I had to express my mind in writing. I informed him that like an opium-eater I was so much addicted to meditation that I could not voluntarily discontinue it. I asked him to apply some medicine which might bring about a state of swoon or sleep and thereby give rest to my brain. He complied with my request. He prescribed some medicine, which induced sleep. This forced rest had its desired effect, only so far that I got temporary relief from pain. But the disease was not cured. After some days he made an operation on two arteries on the two sides of my forehead and spilt some blood. This blood-spilting was a special feature of his treatment. He also prescribed old Ghee to be rubbed regularly on the head and directed me to take bath daily at 4 a. m. Having dwelt at his house under his special care for a fortnight, I left Rajshahi. I was then taken by my old friends and brother-disciples to Mymensingh, Dacca, Faridpur and Calcutta.* Having stopped a few days in each of these places, I returned to Benares. All the while I was abiding by the instructions of the Kaviraj. I got some relief from the pain.

I then went back to Broach. From Broach I retired to Manar,—a locality twelve miles from Broach and just on the bank of the Narmada, not far from the place where the wide river runs into the ocean. It

*While I was at Faridpur I saw Prabhu Jagatbandhu lying on a bed seriously attacked by a severe type of paralysis resulted from his shutting up in a cottage for a long period.

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was a very lonely place. A small grass-hut was temporarily constructed for my residence. There were three villages on three sides of the place, and each was at a distance of about a mile from it. Here I obtained a tiny little boat without any covering, which was used for carrying grass in the day-time and left anchored at night in the river in the proximity of my hut. During the time of in-flow of water from the sea the boat floated almost in mid-river. For the enjoyment of the sweet breeze of the open river as well as for the avoidance of the company of snakes and mosquitoes, I made the little boat my night-residence. The boat had not room enough within it for my lying at full length. Still I remained happily there. The cool and tender breeze blowing in from the open sea, the soft and broad breast of the Narmada and the starry firmament over the head had a soothing effect upon my brain. I passed the days and nights in meditation, for that was my only occupation there. I was still using medicine. But no medicine was available in that lonely quarter. I could not therefore stay on very long there and had to return to Broach.

At Broach there was proper arrangement for food, medicine and everything that I might require. I lived there for some time without any inconvenience. But one day while I was taking a walk, the thought arose in my mind all on a sudden that I must leave the place immediately. That very instant I hastened to the station and got entrance into the next available train without any ticket. I had no fixed destination. The train was bound for Bombay. While being carried by the train I made up my mind to go to some place on the bank

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of the Krishná. I reached Bombay at about 10 P. M. I got a piece of paper from some shop and wrote down in Hindi a few words asking for information about the G. I. P. station, wherefrom the trains for Poona should start. I intentionally did not write in English, for I feared that it might rouse some suspicion in the minds of the people with regard to my nationality and the motive of my travelling in the garb of a *Sadhu*. English-knowing Bengali young men touring in the Sannyasi-dress were in those days generally looked upon with suspicion by the Police and the people in all the provinces. Being a *mauni* I could not talk. I tried to show the piece of paper to several persons, but they fled from me, I knew not why. Some others, whom I approached, exhibited an attitude of negligence or defiance. I found how difficult it was for a *mauni* to travel, especially in unknown places. However, after experiencing a good deal of trouble and vexation, I got some assistance from a drunkard. When I showed the paper to him, he took pity on me and gave me directions as to the G. I. P. station. He offered me one anna for tram-fare, but this I refused to accept. Then he somehow managed to send me to the station. Therefrom I took the train, travelled without ticket, and reached the Krishná-Sangam Máhuli.

For three days I had practically to go without food. Nobody came forward with any offering of food and I had resolved not to approach anyone with the begging bowl for it. I selected a site and sat down in meditation. I took rest for a little while at night and the whole day and the major portion of the night I passed

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in communion with my inner self. The body became weak. Seeing me passing my days in a lonely spot without meals, two urchins, ten or twelve years in age, sons of a goldsmith, were moved by compassion and managed to get some scanty food and offered it to me. Though the food was altogether insufficient to satisfy my hunger and strengthen my body, I was delighted with their noble effort. After three days had elapsed, the attention of the local Brahmins was drawn towards me and they arranged for my daily bread. I went on merrily with my meditation.

While staying there, I received from an unknown gentleman of Satara a small chit containing some questions on vedantic topics. I wrote down the answers and sent them with the bearer of the chit. Having got the answers, the gentleman came to see me at 4 a. m. and requested the favour of my residing at his house at Satara for a few days. After some months I left the Krishná-bank and went to Satara on my way to Benares. The gentleman was very hospitable to me. He requested me again and again to pay a visit to his Guru, Swami Siddhárudha, of whom he spoke very highly. Swamiji was described as a श्रोत्रिय (well-versed in Scriptures), as ब्रह्मनिष्ठ (realiser of Truth) and as a great सिद्ध (endowed with miraculous psychic powers). Swamiji was residing at Hubli. I felt inclined to see him. Accordingly I changed the programme and went to Hubli.

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CHAPTER XIX

Swa'mi Siddha'rudha and Da'da'ji 'Dhuniwa'lla'

I reached Hubli station at sunset. Swamiji's *A'shrama* was about a mile from the station. I went direct to the *Ashrama* and saw the Swami. He appeared to be a venerable old saintly man, about 80 years old. I found him encircled by some two hundred admirers. He put to me a few questions, to which on account of my vow of silence I could give no reply. He found out that I was a *mauni* and without further questions he asked me to take a seat. The old *Sadhu* presented plenty of sweet-meats before me and affectionately asked me to make use of them then and there. I complied.

I found there some Pandit explaining *Yoga-Va'shishtha* to the assembly and Swamiji occasionally clearing the abstruse points. Next morning I found an attendance of about forty persons, the Pandit explaining Brahma-sutras and Swamiji supplementing. Swamiji had a systematic programme for giving lessons to his followers. The morning-class was for specially earnest students and the evening-congregation was for the people in general. Swamiji's manners were very sweet and attractive, and his mode of explanation was very lucid and impressive.

I was attracted by his personality and erudition. I thought within myself that my vow of silence was taken for my benefit, and that if on any occasion by breaking the vow I could derive greater intellectual and spiritual

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benefit, I should not deprive myself of it for the sake of the vow. I made up my mind to talk with Swamiji and take lessons from him. I put down on a piece of paper that if Swamiji should grant me private interviews and allow me to talk with him alone, I would like to forgo the vow. He agreed. Some follower of Swamiji ushered me to his presence, when he was sitting alone. I put to him a few questions on Vedanta. He answered them to my satisfaction.

My programme had been to stop there for a day or two. Now I changed my mind. I wanted to stay longer and Swamiji approved of it. I attended the morning-class and raised problems which were very much liked by Swamiji and solved by him. Swamiji told me, "Well, you should put such questions every-day, and these people who do not know how to raise subtle problems will be profited by them." My questions would arouse his enthusiasm and he would answer them with great delight in his usual simple clear and lucid style. I would not speak to anyone except Swamiji, and with him also my talk was confined to the morning-class.

I remember to have had on one occasion a contro-versy between Swamiji and myself. Swamiji asserted,—"God's grace should be recognised along with the Law of Karma," My point was,—"If you accept the Law of Karma, you cannot consistently believe in the Divine grace." Swamiji replied "God's grace is like air or fire. Air is present everywhere; some can make use of it in one way, and some in another way, some may contrive to get more of it and some may get less. Here they

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have to depend upon Karma. Fire is blazing somewhere; some may remain at a distance and may not enjoy its warmth; some may advance near it and be relieved from cold. Here air or fire is not the product of *Karma*; but to utilize it for one's benefit, one has to rely on *Karma*. That is also the case with Divine grace. I objected "Swamiji, you have to prove the truth of the Divine Grace and what has to be proved cannot be taken for granted. We assume the Law of Karma. Here the question is—Is there a uniformity between actions and their fruits? If the same actions are uniformly followed by the same consequences in accordance with the Law, there is no room for the grace of God or for any supernatural interference. If this uniformity be absent, whether due to the Divine Grace or to any kind of supernatural interference, the Law of Karma fails. In that case the Divine Will alone may be regarded as the sole cause of the enjoyments and sufferings of the creatures. But that would mean partiality and cruelty on the part of God. The examples of air and fire are of no avail. They are objects of our experience and they are what they are, having neither grace nor cruelty, having no concern with how the people profit by or suffer from them. Profiting or suffering follows uniformly from the actions of men. Here the Law of Karma alone is sufficient to account for their happiness and misery. How can Divine Grace be proved? It is neither an object of our direct experience nor necessary for explaining the courses of our destiny."

Swamiji cited another example. He said "In the *swayambara'sabha'* (a congregation in which a girl is

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to choose her husband from among the suitors present) all the persons have assembled for the same object, and each of them desires to have the girl. Here their *Karmas* are of the same nature. But only one person gets the girl, viz. he whom the girl chooses. Thus inspite of similar endeavours, success in life depends upon the Grace of God." I retorted. "This appears to be a palpable violation of the Law of Karma. The conclusion from this analogy would be that success or unsuccess is not the result of actions at all, but that of the arbitrary choice or will of God. Further, the Swayambara-girl has her likes and dislikes, which determine her choice. Some girls have a high admiration for heroism, some have a stronger attraction for beauty, some have a still stronger ambition for wealth, so on. A girl's choice is influenced by her peculiar mentality as well as by the reports she gets about the acquisitions of the suitors present. But God cannot be supposed to be guided by such likes and dislikes,—by His attraction for certain objects and abhorrence of others. The example is therefore not to the point. Moreover, if God acts according to the Karma of the creatures, His freedom is curtailed and his Grace becomes meaningless. If He be merely a dispenser of justice, *i. e.* an impartial executor of the law of karma, He cannot afford to be either merciful or cruel. He cannot be supposed to have the freedom of conferring any blessings upon anybody in excess of what he deserves by virtue of his own Karma, nor the freedom to deny to any person what he deserves. In that view of the case, the law of Karma alone may be accepted as sufficient for explaining the

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differences of our enjoyments and sufferings and the agency of God would be unnecessary. On the other hand if He showers His blessings upon particular creatures in disregard of their actions, the Law of Karma is defied and people cannot have faith in the merits or demerits of their virtuous or vicious deeds. The moral code would then be useless. Even if it be supposed that God in His mercy lessens the severity of the painful results of vicious actions and bestows blessings upon the virtuous people in excess of their merits, then also the Law of Karma is falsified. Thus the Divine Grace is inconsistent with Law of Karma.

I got no satisfactory solution of this problem from him or from anybody else thereafter. However, charmed by Swamiji's sweet behaviour, I stayed there for one month. On the eve of my departure, he affectionately touched my shoulders and gave me a piece of advice full of kindness and sympathy for the poor ignorant simple-minded well-meaning people of the country. He said "When you impart instruction to the people, please have a kind and sympathetic consideration for the poor souls not endowed with intelligence enough for understanding abstruse truths". His words touched my heart. I could understand what led the religious teachers with deeply logical and philosophical insight to make compromises with popular thoughts, sentiments and practices and to participate in the rituals and observances of the lower orders of their countrymen. I could not however persuade myself in actual practice to accept his advice *in toto*. I thought that these high-minded religious teachers were in many cases led astray by

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their wide sympathy and kindness into giving undue indulgence to the superstitious ideas and vitiated tastes of the ignorant people and thereby doing positive injury to them. The moral, spiritual and intellectual superiority of these teachers gave them power and authority to mould the life and thought and feeling of the piety-seeking saint-adoring soft-hearted simple-minded ordinary people of this great country. But unfortunately instead of exercising their influence for guiding these people in the direction of what they themselves knew to be really true and good and noble and to be permanently elevating to the country as a whole, they often pampered the crude thoughts and vitiated tastes of these people and gave these ignorant folks the false impression that they were moving in the right path. I found myself temperamentally unfit to follow the advice and example of these soft-hearted religious teachers. I never took the responsibility of a religious teacher. But when anybody came to seek my advice, I would always freely express my opinion without looking to their sentiments and pre-conceived ideas. Thereby I often wounded the feelings of many pious men, but I could not help it.

It had been my programme to go to Benares from Hubli. But at the time of departure it struck me that when I proceeded so far southward, I should not take a northern turn without paying a visit to Rámeshwara. I reached Rameshwara—a *mauni*, without a single pice in my pocket. There I had to suffer immense trouble, particularly in the matter of food. I went to one place in expectation of some thing to eat. The people there

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merrily asked me to pass on to some other place. Therefrom I was forcibly driven out to seek refuge at another. From this place also I was turned out. Thus for a morsel of bread I had to run like a dog from door to door, to be cruelly hunted out from each door by the religion-loving inhabitants of the sacred *tirtha*. I saw Rameshwara,—the Lord mythologically said to have been worshipped by Rámachandra. The Lord did not reveal Himself to my eyes as any thing more than a small black piece of stone. As I had no feeling of *Bhakti* (devotion) for the piece of stone, I could not persuade myself to bow down before it. I only viewed it from a distance.

From Rameshwara I turned back to Madras and stopped for a week at the Rama Krishna Mission. There I felt inclined to go to Nasik and plunge myself again into meditation at the *Tapobana*. Accordingly I reached Nasik, only to find that *Kumbha mela* had assembled there and that *Tapobana*, which I had expected to be a place of solitude, was densely populated by Sadhus of various denominations. I was disappointed. Next day I left Nasik and started for Benares. In all these travels I could buy no ticket, because I was penniless. When the train was about to pass by Gudurwada (near Jubbalpore) one *Sadhu* travelling in the same compartment with me told me that about fourteen miles from the nearest station on the bank of the Narmada lived an extraordinary *Siddha Maha'purusha*, whose equal could be scarcely found in the whole of India. Immediately I felt an inquisitiveness to have a sight of the great *Maha'tma* and alighted at the

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Gudurvada Station. The Sadhu also followed me. We two walked on foot to the Mahatma's place. He was known by the name of Dádáji Dhuniwállá. He had no Ashrama of his own. I found Dadaji surrounded by many persons who used to assemble there every day. Dadaji was stark naked. He sat by the side of a fire-place (*dhuni*). Three of his disciples including one Mahomedan, were also naked and sat near him. I joined the party. I was also naked, though I covered my body with a blanket. Sometimes Dadaji used to feed me affectionately with his own hand along with Chota-dada, the Mahomedan disciple and another Bengali disciple. I saw him some times singing, sometimes dancing, sometimes beating people nearby and sometimes making obscene gestures. Never did I find him sitting calmly or meditating. When anybody put any question to him, he would not generally answer, or if he happened to give any answer at all, he would utter something which was unintelligible or which had no connection with the topic. The special features which I noticed in his behaviour were that he did not care for the feelings or opinions of anybody, rich or poor, influential or uninfluential, that he had no attraction for money and did not keep a single penny with him, and that he attached little value to the things which are ordinarily regarded as very precious, such as high-priced clothes which he sometimes burnt in the *Dhuni*. When he began to beat the people, he did not discriminate between men of high position and men of no position, between his admirers and those who occasionally came to see him. I did not find any occult power in him.

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I marked some points of difference between Dadaji and Swami Sidharudha, both of whom were very highly respected by their admireres and both of whom were regarded as *Siddha Mahatmas*. Swamiji amasses money, while Dadaji has no concern about money; so Swamiji cannot behave with the rich and the poor in the same manner, while Dadaji makes no distinction between them. Swamiji collects rich clothes, while Dadaji burns them to ashes. Swamiji carefully answers the questions put to him, Dadaji does not. Swamiji seems to have a desire for nam and fame, while Dadaji seems not to care a fig for it. Swamiji sits calm and quiet and has a meditative mood, while Dadaji appears to be restless. Swamiji's manners are very sweet and enchanting, while Dadaji's manners are rough and sometimes revolting to our sense of decency. Swamiji is surrounded by people who are interested in religious discourses and devotional practices which continue in his *Ashrama* almost continually from 4 a. m. to 10 p. m.; while Dadaji is generally surrounded by people who expect from the merciful exercise of his supposed supernatural powers such worldly gains as wealth, children, recovery from disease, success in litigation etc.

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CHAPTER XX

With Some Noble Souls at Benares

I stayed in Dadaji's *Ashrama* for five days and then started for Benares. At Benares I put up at the Ashighat Ashrama and was under the treatment of a renowned Homoeopath (Kali Babu). He also like many other physicians concluded that deep and continued meditation was the cause of my head-disease and he advised me to divert my attention to some other objects in order to get relief from the acute pain. On account of my vow of silence I could not fully and clearly express my ideas to the doctor. I therefore thought it prudent now to abandon the vow. Thus the period of my *Mauna* (silence) which began at the *Mauni Gufa* of Mt. Abu terminated at Benares after two years.

On this occasion I came in contact with four persons of note. One was Pandit Swami of Dandi Math. (Ashighat). I had discussions with him on several vedantic topics. I often used to go to the venerable old Shastri, Anantarám, the teacher of the famous saint, Bháskaránanda. I put various questions to him and learnt from him many subtle logical processes for the establishment of Vedantic doctrines. Sadhu Magnirám was another saint, whose company was very enjoyable to me. I was highly impressed by his mode of life. He was always in a meditative mood. In his earlier days he had been reputed as a great scholar of Indian Philosophy. But in his later life he gave up scholarship and devoted himself to meditation. He spoke very few words and these were always very weighty. The fourth

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notable person whom I went to see now and then was Harihar Baba. Though almost illiterate and without any philosophical training, he was very sincere and full of contenment. He was wholly naked and lived under the open sky on the bank of the Ganges. His manners were sweet, but scarcely did he instruct the persons who came to see him. I liked to see him.

I had long and intimate acquaintance with Swami Turiyánand, a direct disciple of Sri Rama Krishna. I held him in high esteem. He was a Vedantic scholar as well as a *Bhakta* (devotee). He was now residing at the Ramakrishna Sevásram, Benares. I used to go there to enjoy his company now and then. One day I went to him with Nibrittinath and had an interesting discussion with him on the relative value of *Jnana* (knowledge) and *Bhakti* (devotion). Swamiji explained in his own characteristic way that Jnana and Bhakti are two stand-points from which the Ultimate Reality–Brahman–may be viewed and realised, and both of them are equally true. In support of his assertion he quoted a well-known *sloka,* said to have been addressed by Hanumán to Lord Rámachandra, whom Hanuman worshipped as the embodiment of the Ultimate Reality. The sloka means,—"From the view-point of the body (i. e. viewed as an embodied creature) I am your servant (*Dasa*), viewed as a finite spirit (*Jiva*), I am your part (*Amsha*). But really you and I are identical. This is my firm conviction."

I protested against Swamiji's view as to the equality of *Jnana* and *Bhakti* and also against his interpretation of the sloka. My contention was this. All forms of

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Sadhana are resorted to with the purpose of emancipation from bondage and sorrow. But what are bondage and sorrow due to? They are due to the false identification of the self with the gross and the subtle bodies and its false relation with the objects of sensuous and mental experience. The self falsely identifies itself with the body and the mind, and suffers from the limitations and modifications and vicissitudes of the body and the mind which it ascribes to itself. If this is admitted, bondage and sorrow must be regarded as due to ignorance,—ignorance about the true nature of the self,—ignorance of the absolute identity of the self with the eternally pure free blissful changeless, differenceless, infinite, self-luminous Being-Consciousness, Brahman. If the illusory bondage and sorrow are to be got rid of, this false identification of the self with the body and the mind must be destroyed and therefore the ignorance must be destroyed. There is and can be no other direct means to emancipation from bondage and sorrow. True knowledge alone can destroy ignorance; the realisation of the true character of the self, *i.e.* the self's identity with Brahman can alone cut at the root of the self's illusory self-identification with the not-self.

Thus we must admit that true knowledge of the infinite eternal changeless unrelated unconditional character of the self is the sole means to absolute deliverance from all bondage and sorrow. Now what is the place of *Bhakti* as a form of Sadhana? What does the Bhakti-standpoint imply? Is not Bhaki essentially based on the sense of difference between the self and Brahman? Does it not take for granted that the self is

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finite, while Brahman is infinite, that the self is with limited knowledge and power, while Brahman is Omniscient and Omnipotent, that the self is under the domination of Maya, while Brahman is the Lord of Maya? We have seen that this apparent finitude of the self, its apparent limitation of knowledge and power, its being under the influence of the worldly forces,—all these are due to Ignorance. Ignorance is the mother of its sense of difference from Brahman. Hence it must be admitted that *Bhakti*, instead of destroying Ignorance, rather cherishes it. What appears as real through the veil of Ignorance is accepted as ultimately real by Bhakti. Bhakti, therefore, may be regarded as a child of Ignorance, though it may be a very beautiful and lovely child. Bhakti, as a form of Sadhana, may help us in the purification of our body and mind. Love and devotion to the Divine Personality (though this conception of Personality is itself the product of Ignorance), may ennoble and sweeten our character and divert our mind from the degrading attachments to and desires for the gross objects of sensuous enjoyment. Faith in the Divine Love and Mercy and Justice may give temporary solace to our mind in the midst of adversities. But the Bhakti-standpoint itself being the product of Ignorance, it cannot destroy Ignorance. It does not even tend to give us true knowledge,—to reveal to us the identity of the self and Brahman,—without which ultimate deliverance from bondage and sorrow is impossible. How then can *Bhakti* claim to occupy the same seat of honour with *Jnana*? How can it be maintained that the two view-points are equally true? Can even the highest and noblest view-point of Ignorance be

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regarded as equally true with the view-point of true knowledge ?

I further asserted that the *sloka* cited by Swamijee did also support my contention. The sloka says that from the view-point of the body (*Deha dristya'*) Brahman is the Lord and the *Jiva* is His servant, and from the stand-point of the apparent finitude of the *Jiva* (*Jiva-buddhya'*) Brahman is the Whole and the *Jiva* is His part; but in reality (*vastutastu*) the *Jiva* is identical with Brahman. Here it is admitted that the first two view-points are not real, while the third view-point only is real. When the self identifies itself with the body, Brahman is conceived as the Lord; when it identifies itself with the mind (*Antahkarana*) and thinks itself limited, then it conceives itself as a part of the Infinite. But identification of the self with the body or the mind is not based on truth, but is false and illusory, due to Ignorance. The truth is, as the sloka says, the identity of the self with Brahman, i. e. infinity, eternity, changelessness, attributelessness, self-existence, self-completeness, self-luminosity, non-duality of the self. The sloka therefore evidently implies that the realisation of this truth is the highest ideal of life. That is to say, Jnana alone can lead to the ultimate goal of human life and is the supreme form of *Sadhana*. Bhakti is useful only so long as *Dehabuddhi* and *Jivabuddhi*, which are born of Ignorance, are cherished.

Swamiji, as a follower of Advaita Vedanta, could not refute my contention. He took my repudiation of his spirit of compromise in a sportive manner. Turning

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to Nibrittinath, he smilingly exclaimed, "See how he explains his point of view!"

Turning toward me Swamijee pleasantly said—"Yes, you have logically and forcibly exposed your standpoint, *i. e.* the standpoint of Jnana. Here you have quite reasonably assigned a subordinate position to Bhakti. But the whole problem may be viewed in a different light from the Bhakti standpoint. You have rightly said that Ignorance is the source of bondage and sorrow, and that this Ignorance, so far as the individual Jivas are concerned, consists in the illusory identification of the self with the gross and the subtle bodies. But what is the source of this Ignorance? You cannot assign any source to it and hence speak of it as inexplicable, as neither-real-non-unreal, as without beginning in time, but still capable of being destroyed in time by the effort of the Jiva through the attainment of true knowledge. Don't you see that in such statements you go beyond what your logic strictly justifies you in asserting? Whenever a Jiva becomes conscious of himself, he finds himself within the domain of Ignorance; he does not create Ignorance, he cannot find out any cause of his Ignorance, he can never discover that his Ignorance is the product or effect of anything. How can he possibly destroy or get rid of such Ignorance by dint of any effort of his own. The general law is that what is produced can be destroyed, and what has no origination cannot have any destruction. When you assert, from the standpoint of Jnana, the possibility of the destruction of beginningless and causeless Ignorance by the effort of the Jiva, don't you

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contradict this law? Can you ever adequately explain how the produced knowledge of a Jiva can destroy the unproduced Ignorance from which his jivahood has originated? Again, from the viewpoint of our actual experience we cannot but recognise the reality of all bondage and sorrow, which, as you say, are the products of Ignorance. Hence Ignorance must be conceived to be as much real entity as we ourselves with our bondage and sorrow are. When you describe Ignorance as neither real-nor-unreal, you apply an extralogical category to explain the nature of an entity whose existence you cannot deny. Do not all these indicate that when we proceed logically to solve any ultimate problem, we finally arrive at a position at which strictly logical explanation fails. This is perhaps the fate of all logical speculation. Consequently at that stage there is always room for difference of viewpoints. From the Bhakti-standpoint it is held that this Ignorance which is the source of our bondage and sorrow from which we aspire after emancipating ourselves, is though without beginning in time, to be recognised as of the nature of an effect, in as much as it is a manifestation of the creative will of Brahman. Brahman, according to this viewpoint, being the ultimate Reality, must, by Himself, furnish an adequate explanation of all that exists and all that we can possibly experience as real in our knowledge. As the sole ground of this universe of conscious and unconscious individual beings, Brahman must, according to this view, be regarded as the Supreme Personal Being endowed with infinite powers and qualities. It is by reference to this Brahman that we must

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explain our beginningless Ignorance as well. Hence the Bhakti-schools hold that Ignorance, instead of being regarded as an inexplicable neither-real-nor-unreal entity, ought more properly be conceived as one of the forms of self-expression of Brahman. In that view of the case it is Brahman who is the real Ground of real Ignorance, and it is Brahman again Who has the inherent power to destroy Ignorance or to emancipate the jivas from the domain of Ignorance. This power of Brahman to destroy Ignorance in particular cases and to emancipate Jivas from bondage and sorrow produced from Ignorance, is called by the Bhaktas *Divine Grace*. Accordingly, when the Bhaktas seek for deliverance from bondage and sorrow, they do not rely upon their independent efforts (*i. e.* their own Sadhana), because these efforts themselves and even the knowledge that may be attained through these efforts, imply the presence of Ignorance at the root. They, therefore, appeal to and pray for the mercy or grace of Brahman. Brahman being eternally transcendent of Ignorance and the sole Ground of Ignorance, can at His will destroy Ignorance or deliver the Bhaktas from Ignorance. Their Sadhana, accordingly, consists in so disciplining their thoughts, desires and feelings and concentrating their energy as to become worthy of the Divine Grace. They agree with the advocates of Jnana that true knowledge about the essential supra-corporeal spiritual character of the Self is necessary for deliverance from Ignorance—from the illusory identification between the Self and the bodies. But such knowledge, they hold, can be attained only through the Grace of Brahman, since

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Jiva's knowledge, however advanced and refined, must necessarily imply the presence of Ignorance at its root. They, therefore, practise *Jnana* as a factor in their Bhakti-Sadhana. They try to get rid of all kinds of superstitions and errors and illusions, in so far as they can be detected and destroyed by their intellectual knowledge. But for ultimate deliverance from the root-Ignorance, they, consistently with their viewpoint, rely upon the mercy of the Divine.

"You may, however, raise such pertinent questions as,—why should Brahman originally create such Ignorance and put His eternal spiritual parts (*jivas*) under its dominion, why should He inflict such diverse kinds of restraints and sufferings upon these Jivas, why should He, at any stage of their struggles within the world of Ignorance, awaken in them a yearning for emancipation from this Ignorance, why should He, after leading them to various kinds of trials and difficulties, bestow mercy upon them and deliver them from Ignorance and bondage, why should He be cruel with respect to many Jivas and be merciful with respect to a few and that also in particular stages of their mundane journey, etc. etc. I may frankly tell you that such questions do not admit of rationally satisfactory answers. The Bkaktas also virtually admit this when they speak of *Lila'* or the *sportive* self-expression of the Divine. They confess that inscrutable are the ways of the self-manifestations of the Power of Brahman. Here you may see that there is a meeting ground of the two schools of thought with regard to the ultimate explanation of the mysterious order of the universe. What the advocates of Jnana

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speak of as *inexplicable* in terms of any recognised categories is described by the Bhakti-school as the *inscrutable* manifestation of the incomprehensible Power of Brahman. Both of them confess their incapacity to solve the ultimate problems. But the urge of their intellectual, moral and spiritual nature compels them to seek for the Truth, and each of them adopts a particular viewpoint and regulates his intellectual, moral and spiritual life in accordance with it. Hence there is no use in wrangling logically with regard to the ultimate character of the Truth,—attempting to prove the absolute validity of any particular viewpoint by vanquishing all others. It is more reasonable, I think, to remain conscious of the limitations of our intellectual power, to regulate our life sincerely and earnestly in accordance with the viewpoint which may appeal to our mind and heart and to be telerant of and respectful towards all other viewpoints and all other ways of life.

"Let me further add that so far as I have got entrance into the spirit of Vedanta, I find no incompatibility between Bhakti-Sadhana and Jnana-Sadhana side by side. Brahman, as essentially the transcendent substratum of Maya or Cosmic Ignorance, is eternally attributeless, inactive, impersonal, Existence-Consciousness. This Maya or Ignorance being not an independent self-existent reality like Brahman, it does not in any way affect the non-duality of Brahman. But the phenomenal existence of Maya or Cosmic Ignorance is admitted to be co-eternal with Brahman. Accordingly Brahman has also been conceived as eternally conditioned or qualified by this Maya or Cosmic Ignorance. Thus from

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the absolute point of view Brahman is eternally unconditioned by Maya, and from the phenomenal point of view Brahman is eternally conditioned by Maya. In the former aspect Brahman is eternally Nirguna (attributeless) Niskriya (actionless) and impersonal, and in the latter aspect Brahman is eternally Saguna (with attributes) Sakriya (active) and personal. A true follower of Vedanta does and ought to accept both these aspects of Brahman, and he practises Jnana by keeping the former aspect in view and Bhakti by keeping the latter aspect in view. When he practises deep contemplation and meditation he concentrates his attention upon the Nirguna aspect of Brahman and thinks of the essential identity between his ownself and Brahman. He then becomes or tries to become wholly indifferent to the existence of Maya or Cosmic Ignorance. But in other stages and particularly when he lives in normal life, he is conscious of the presence of Maya as the source of the world-order and thinks of Brahman as conditioned by Maya and hence as the Lord of this world-order. At such stages he being conscious of himself as an individual *jiva* dwelling within the world of Maya, and Brahman being conceived as the sole Lord of this world of Maya, he naturally bows down to Him and practises devotion (Bhakti) in relation to Him. Accordingly Jnana-Sadhana and Bhakti-Sadhana advance side by side in the life of a Sadhaka who accepts Vedanta as a whole."

I listened to the discourse of Swami Turiyanand with respectful attention which his advanced age, wide erudition and disciplined character commanded. His

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treatment of the problem was quite in keeping with his discipleship of the great Saint of Dakhineshwar, Sri Ramkrishna Paramahansa, who is generally regarded as a prophet of the doctrine of the Harmony of Faiths. I, however, could not accept what he said *in toto*. My mind was then fascinated by the logic of Vedanta, and it rejected whatever was found insupportable by this logic.

First of all, I was not convinced that the Vedantic Logic failed to solve the ultimate problems just in the same way as the other systems of philosophy and was therefore on the same level with them. It was my conviction that Vedanta established its own position by logically refuting the arguments of all other rival systems. It assumed just as much as logical necessity compelled it to do and nothing more. Thus Vedanta confessed that no logically unassailable causal explanation could be produced for the world-order which is actually experienced. It arrived at the notion of Nirguna Brahman as witness-consciousness, because it was led to it necessarily through the analysis of the nature of knowledge, which nobody could possibly deny. Brahman, as the real cause, either material or efficient, of the cosmic process, could not be logically established, and it therefore boldly denied any such causal relation between Brahman and the world of diversities. The inexplicable character of the objective universe as well as of its ultimate cause did not merely mean that they were incapable of being adequately explained or described by the finite human mind; but it was a positive conclusion which was logically arrived at through the analysis of

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the nature of the objects of our knowledge as well as of their ultimate cause. According to Vedanta the term 'inexplicable' and "neither-real-nor-unreal" were not negative terms having only negative significance, but they were positive categories with positive meanings. The term "real" meant what could never be unreal at any time and hence what could never have any beginning or end, what must be eternal and above time, what could not admit of any change or transformation. The true Reality must therefore be a changeless self-existent entity above all conditions of time and space. The objects of our experience being found to be subject to the conditions of time and space, having origination, transformation and destruction, do not satisfy the true meaning of *Reality*. All the objects of this world of experience are found to be unreal before their origination and after their destruction, they are not found to be exactly of the same character throughout their period of appearance, the nature of each of them is conditioned by its relation to other objects. The only factor which we find in all their changing appearances is Existence which therefore can be regarded as real in the true sense of the term. On the other hand, these objects cannot be described as absolutelly unreal in the sense of altogether non-existent, in as much as they appear as existent in our actual experience. Hence a category, intermediate between real and unreal, between absolutely existent and absolutely non-existent must be admitted as logically necessary for describing the nature of all the objects of actual and possible experience, constituting the objective world. Accordingly, the

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category neither-real-nor-unreal is admitted by Vedantic logic as a positive logical category. The term "inexplicable" also has the same significance. Now, in the domain of our rational explanation, the cause and its effect are recognised as belonging to the same plane of existence. Hence the category which is to be applied to describe the nature of the world of effects should be likewise applicable to its ultimate material cause. On this ground the Vedantists are logically justified in asserting that the ultimate material cause of this world must, like the world itself, be a phenomenal reality, which is logically to be characterised as neither-real-not-unreal and inexplicable.

Again, a phenomenal reality being not self-existent, logically demands a self-existent Reality (which alone can be called real in the true logical sense of the term) as its substratum, by the existence of which it exists and by the luminosity of which it is revealed as existent. Accordingly, Vedanta quite legitimately assumes that the transcendent witness consciousness, which has been epistemologically proved to be the sole self-existent and self-luminous Reality, is also the substratum of the ultimate material cause of the world of objects. Thus the self-existent and self-luminous impersonal Brahman, which is assumed by Vedanta, is the necessary and inevitable logical postulate for the rational explanation of our objective knowledge and the world of its objects, neither of which can possibly be denied by us. Hence there is no undue assumption in Vedantic logic.

Now, it is also a fact that the true character of the transcendent consciousness is veiled and is made

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to appear as diversified by our knowledge and the world of its objects. We actually experience the diverse kinds of objects and of our knowledge as modifying itself in the forms of those objects, but we do not experience the transcendent consciousness or Brahman, which is the absolute Reality behind our knowledge and the substratum underlying the world of diversities. Hence the ultimate material cause of the world of diversities, including the functions of our minds, is quite logically described by Vedanta as of the nature of a veil upon the essential nature of the self-existent and self-luminous non-dual substratum. In the field of our normal phenomenal experience what serves as a veil upon the true nature of a phenomenal object and makes it appear otherwise, is designated by the name of ignorance. On the analogy of this ignorance, the ultimate material cause of the world of plurality, being of the nature of a veil upon the absolute Reality, may rightly be called Root-Ignorance. This is why Vedanta describes the material cause of the world as neither-real-nor-unreal inexplicable Ignorance, and there is nothing illogical or extralogical in this description. Again, when the true nature of a real entity is veiled and it appears to actual knowledge in the form of an unlike object, such an object is regarded as having merely an illusory or apparent existence. On this account the world of plurality which appears as the product of Root-Ignorance on Brahman as its substratum, is legitimately described by Vedanta as having merely an apparent or illusory existence from the stand-point of the Absolute Reality. When the true knowledge of the Reality is attained,

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the veil disappears, the illusory world vanishes, and the Reality shines in its true character. Thus the contention of Vedanta that the true knowledge of Brahman alone can be the sole means for the destruction of Ignorance and for deliverance from the illusory bondage and sufferings from which the self apparently suffers in this illusory world, is based on unassailable logic.

Hence there is no ground for saying that Vedanta also, like the other systems of philosophy, fails to solve the ultimate problems and therefore leaves room for difference of view-points and play of imagination. What we find by a thorough study of Vedantic logic is that the impersonal self-luminous inactive character of Brahman, the inexplicable character of the ultimate material cause of this world, the illusory appearance of the world of relativity upon Brahman as its substratum, the identity of the individual self (which is essentially nothing but the eternal infinite transcendent consciousness) with Brahman, the contradiction between the true knowledge of Brahman and the Root-Ignorance which is the root of the world and the destructibility of this Ignorance by the true knowledge, etc.,—all these are established by unassailable logical arguments. Therefore, it must be admitted that the Jnana-Sadhana has the most satisfactory rational philosophy as its basis, and the Bhakti-Sadhana can in no way bear comparison with it in this respect. The Bhakti-Sadhana is based on the assumption that Brahman is an active personal Being, creating and governing the world of plurality by the exercise of his arbitrary will and

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ruling over the destinies of the Jivas in accordance with some moral Law, which also must depend upon His will. Again, the Bhaktas think of Brahman as being merciful to some, indifferent to others, and in some cases even showing hatred towards some of his own creatures. All such conceptions are evidently products of wishful thinking and unwarrantable imagination. A form of Sadhana based upon such unphilosophical plays of imagination can never claim to occupy the same place of honour with Jnana-Sadhana which is based upon perfectly rational philosophical conclusions, and can never be legitimately conceived as leading to the same ultimate goal of spiritual life, viz. the realisation of the absolute Truth and the destruction of Root-Ignorance.

Personality and impersonality, activity and inactivity, presence of attributes and absence of attributes, presence of a creative will and absence of such a will,—all these are mutually contradictory terms, and they cannot be equally affirmed of the absolute Realty, Brahman. If Brahman could be proved to be essentially an active creative personal being possessing various kinds of powers and attributes, and if the Jivas could be proved to be essentially distinct individuals dwelling within the world of Divine Creation, then Bhakti Sadhana might be assigned a place superior to that of Jnana Sadhana, or rather the only true form of Sadhana rationally justifiable. In that case the Jiva should retain its individuality and remain distinct from Brahman in the state of Mukti (deliverance from bondage) as much as in the state of bondage. Accordingly from this point of view the contemplation and meditation on the

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identity of the self and Brahman, which is the most central point in Vedantic Jnana-Sadhana would itself be unjustifiable and misleading. Hence Jnana-Sadhana cannot be accepted as an alternative to and having the same efficacy with Bhakti Sadhana from the standpoint of the conceptions of Brahman and Jiva as maintained by the *Bhakti* schools of thought. Further, according to the Bhakti-schools, the creation being real, the world of experience being real, the individuality of Jiva being real, bondage and sufferings also must be regarded as real. Such real bondage and sufferings,—and real ignorance also, if that be conceived as the cause of bondage and sufferings,—can never be destroyed by mere knowledge (Jnana) attainable through the effort of the Jiva. They must be regarded as the product of the Divine Will, and it is the Divine Will alone that can destroy them. Hence from this viewpoint, an aspirant for deliverance from bondage and sorrow must appeal earnestly to the Divine will for mercy, and must therefore practise Bhakti Sadhana for this purpose. Thus we find that the standpoint of Jnan-Sadhana and the stand-point of Bhakti-Sadhana are so diametrically opposite that the end attained by the one can never be attained by the other. Jnana or knowledge, from this point of view, can only play a secondary part for making the Jiva thoroughly convinced of the nature of the Divine Personality and the true relation between Him and the Jiva and the world. When this knowledge is attained, the Jiva becomes perfectly fit for the practice of disinterested devotion (निष्काम भक्ति), which alone is therefore, from this standpoint, the true esoteric (अन्तरंग) Sadhana. The Bhaktas

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therefore cannot assign to Jnana Sadhana a position equal to that of Bhakti Sadhana.

Now, Vedanta, with its sharp weapon of logic, has wholly demolished the metaphysical assumptions of the Bhakti schools. It has proved most satisfactorily,—and you as a veteran Vedantist must admit it,—that the ultimate Truth is impersonal attributeless inactive Brahman, which is the substratum of Cosmic Ignorance, and not Brahman as illusorilly conditioned or qualified by this Ignorance. It has established the real identity of the self and Brahman. It has logically demonstrated that Brahman, conceived as a Personality, is as illusory as the Cosmic Ignorance and its products, the apparent relation to which makes really Nirguna impersonal Brahman appear falsely as Saguna personal Brahman. The worship of and devotion to such Saguna Brahman accordingly amounts to the concentration of mind upon a false entity. When a Sadhaka is thoroughly imbued with the Vedantic logic and is firmly convinced of the illusoriness of the Divine Personality, how can he sincerely and earnestly practise devotion to Him? To him the question of Divine Grace cannot arise at all, because Divine Grace implies the reality of the personality or individuality of Brahman which he has known to be altogether false. Hence the practice of Bhakti or devotion is possible,—and may even be regarded from the practical stand-point as advisable,—only so long as the Sádhaka (spiritual aspirant) is not initiated into the Vedantic logic and is not impressed with the true attributeless and impersonal character of Brahman and the ultimate identity of Jiva and Brahman. He must bid

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good bye to Bhakti Sadhana as soon as he is thoroughly convinced of the Vedantic truth. Again, the essential identity of Jiva and Brahman being established and it being proved that all bondage and sufferings are the illusory products of the Ignorance about the true character of the self, it is evident that true direct knowledge about the nature of the self should immediately destroy this illusion of bondage and sorrow, and that neither any active efforts on the part of the Jivas nor any active help from any extraneous or supernatural Being can be of any use for this purpose. Illusion with regard to any reality disappears automatically as soon as knowledge about the reality appears. So long as this knowledge is not attained, no amount of merciful help from any quarter can remove the illusion and bring about deliverance from bondage and sorrow that may result therefrom. Again, when the knowledge is attained, no such help is necessary. For the attainment of true knowledge the help of a person who has already realised Truth (in the form of instruction, guidance etc.) may be of some use. But such help can be rendered only by a Truth-knowing human being with the gross body, who is called by Vedanta a Jivanmukta Purusha. A truth-knower without a body, but with individual self-consciousness, involves an evident self-contradiction, because released from body a Truth-knower can have no individual existence, but he becomes lost in attributeless Brahman which is his true Self. If Saguna Brahman be supposed to be an eternally Truth-seeing Individual, this supposition also involves self-contradiction. If He is a Person eternally retaining his individuality and always capable of

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exercising the power of knowledge and will (which are products of Ignorance), He is virtually admitted to be eternally embracing Ignorance from which He is never released. How can a Being who is Himself always associated with Ignorance and is never emancipated from it, emancipate any other individual from this Ignorance? The conception of the individuality of God is evidently inconsistent with His deliverership from Ignorance. Accordingly a Sadhaka, who is fully convinced of the essential Nirguna character of Brahman and of the eternal identity of his true self with Brahman can have no reason for being inclined to practise Bhakti-Sadhana, which is based on the illusory Ignorance-embracing character of Brahman. To him Jnana-Sadhana *i. e.* the continuous contemplation and meditation on the Nirguna character of Brahman (which involves the notion of the identity of the self and Brahman) is the only natural course. At the highest stage of this meditation the true Self or Brahman shines by itself in its self-luminous non-dual character and the inexplicable Ignorance vanishes as a matter of course. Thus it is evident that from the true philosophical stand-point, Bhakti-Sadhana can never have a place in the life of a Sadhaka side by side with Jnana-Sadhana.

In this way I tried to impress upon the revered Swamijee that as a Vedantist he could not consistently bring about a harmony between Bhakti and Jnana in the manner he did. If he accepted a Personal God as the ultimate Reality and sorrow and bondage of Jiva as a real creation of God, then he ought to make Jnana subsidiary to Bhakti and to accept Bhakti as the highest

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Sadhana, because in that case the Divine Power alone could destroy the bondage which the Divine Power created. But in that case he must give up his Vedantic position. Vedanta maintains that Impersonal Brahman is the ultimate Reality and that bondage is unreal being the product of Ignorance. The unreal bondage can be destroyed only by the knowledge of Reality which is the substratum of Ignorance producing the bondage. No active power is either necessary or competent to destroy what is unreal. True knowledge alone can destroy unreality or illusion. If bondege had been real, it could not have been destroyed by knowledge, but only by a power, superior to it. But bondage being an unreal product of Ignorance, it can be destroyed by knowledge alone. If this Vedantic position be admitted by Swamijee, he had no right to regard Bhakti-Sadhana as equally effective with Jnana-Sadhana. Hence Swamijee must admit that the spirit of compromise was not compatible with his Vedantic philosophy.

Swamijee in his characteristic amiable manner listened to my arguments and seemed to appreciate them but he did not give up his compromising spirit, which was deeply rooted in his nature. He practised Jnana and Bhakti simultaneously and regarded this as efficacious for all orders of spiritual aspirants. He was affectionate towards me and was earnestly desirous of converting me to his way of thought and practice. When he failed to convince me with logical arguments, he would sometimes try to charm my heart with sweet songs of devotion, love and self-surrender. The sweetness and beauty of such songs would appeal to my heart and

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would even move me to tears. But I could never return to the form of Sadhana, which these songs implied, nor accept the view-point from which these songs flowed. Temperamentally I was unable to look upon the Absolute Truth, Brahman, from two different points of view in different hours of the day. I could not be a non-dualist, when engaged in philosophical study, and a dualist, when practistng Sadhana. I must be consistent and thorough-going in my theory and practice,—this was my idea and this was my nature.

On another day when I went to see Swamijee, I found him ailing. He though very weak, was seated as usual with his head erect and back-bone straight (आसनस्थ). I sat at his feet to hear some sweet words from his holy lips. He of his own accord (without being asked by me), uttered these words " एखन देखछि संसार आवार घिरे फेलछे." (in Bengali)—"Now I see that the world is again having its hold on me." This was sincere out-pouring of the inner mind of a good Sadhaka, who, so far I knew, never engrossed himself too much in mission-work (though he in his youth spent a few years in America and engaged himself in preaching Vedanta at the bidding of Swami Vivekananda), but devoted his time and energy mainly to deeper spiritual self-discipline for a pretty long period. This short sentence turned my thoughts inward and set me thinking seriously on the problem of life. It made me more conscious about the enormity of the task before me and the strength of the worldly forces standing in the way of perfect self-realisation. A man might imbibe the spirit of truth-seeking in his early life, he might come under the influence of a great

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spiritual teacher, he might outwardly renounce the world and pursue the spiritual ideal even from his tender age, he might be equipped with a sharp intelligence and a high order of philosophical insight, but all these would not be a guarantee for his permanently getting rid of the world (संसार) and reaching the ultimate goal of his spiritual life. He might forsake the world, but the world would not forsake him. If there was the slightest slackening of the intensity of *Sadhana* at any stage of progress, due to illness, lethargy, self-complacence, philanthropic spirit or any other cause, the world would again exercise its influence upon the Sadhaka's mind. I got this lesson from that simple sentence uttered by an honest and earnest truth-seeker.

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CHAPTER XXI

With Brother-Disciples in Calcutta

My treatment and meditation went on together. The eminent doctors and Kavirájas of Benares could not cope with my disease. I was advised to go to Calcutta to seek the help of the greatest Homeopath of India, Dr. Unain. I went there. But he also failed. I was examined also by the most distinguished Allopath, Dr. Nilratan Sirkar. He asked me "why do you remain absorbed in meditation? Can't you divert your attention to other things?" I replied, "I experience so much joy in meditation, that at that time I don't care how it affects the body." He said, "We, doctors, don't understand these things. Whatever work you may do,—whether meditation or anything else,—you require the co-operation of your body and brain. You must keep the machine in proper order, and therefore give the machine what its regular working demands. If you want to exact work from your brain, you must give rest and recreation to the brain. You have to divert your attention to some other things, if you want to be cured of your disease." I again sought the help of Kaviraj Haran Chakravarti, who had by this time transferred himself from Rajshahi to Calcutta. The distinguished Kaviraj Shyámádás Váchaspati also treated me for some time. There was an eminent Ayurvedic physician in the village Banaripara in the Barisal district. I went there also to consult him. Nowhere did I get any permanently effective remedy for my strange illness.

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At Benares and in Calcutta* I came in close contact with two ladies, both of whom devoted themselves for sometime to my nursing of their own accord. I remember them, because intimate acquaintance with them brought a change in my ideas about women in general. I had a strong dislike of women. Throughout my life I studiously kept aloof from them. I regarded them as the source of obstacles in the path of human progress, specially in the path of spiritual advancement of men. Their beauty and charm were for leading men astray from the path of spirituality and binding them to the sinful world. Many religious books I read described them as doors to hell. My inherent disposition towards the culture of non-attachment to all objects of sensuous enjoyment and perfect freedom from all worldly ties laid undue emphasis upon such descriptions about the character of women. Scarcely had I any occasion to look at the brighter aspects of women's character. But contact with the two ladies opened my eyes to them. I found out that there was as much goodness in women as in men and that there was as much evil in the nature of the stronger sex as in that of the weaker sex. I felt that men, being physically and perhaps intellectually stronger than women, had done some injustice to the latter, not only in their conduct towards them, but also in the estimation of their character.

* At Calcutta I stopped at the house of Srijut Subodh Chandra Ghosh. He was for sometime Executive Engineer (afterwards Rai Bahadur). He is the elder brother of Sushil. Both the brothers and myself were playmates since our boyhood. They with their families are my co-disciples.

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The women, being naturally mild and gentle, obedient and devoted to service, dependent upon men for their protection and livelihood, silently brooked this injustice. I discovered that lofty idealism, nobility of character, patriotism and philanthrophy, spiritual yearning etc. were not the monopoly of either sex.

While I was in Calcutta I came in close contact with a good many of my fellow-disciples. They were worldly men with a religious temperament. They generally spent an hour or two, and sometimes less, in *Japa* of the Divine Name and thinking of God, and the rest of the day they had to devote their energy to worldly duties. Desires for and attachments to worldly objects they had in full measure like other ordinary men, but along with these they had some amount of reverence, love and devotion to God and the Guru. What they lacked in respect of *purushakara* for self-realisation or God-realisation or deliverance from bondage and sorrow, they fondly hoped to compensate by faith in the mercy of the Lord or the Guru. Though they could seldom rely on the Divine mercy in the mundane affairs of their life, they relied almost wholly on it in their spiritual life. and hoped for attaining *Mukti* without the necessary *sadhana*. They were generally men of emotional temperament, and when their emotions with regard to God or Guru were roused, their faith and belief, their love and reverence, their devotion and self-surrender, appeared to be very real and deeply rooted in their heart, though these might not stand the acid tests in practical life. They were educated gentlemen, but not in the habit of deep thinking with

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regard to spiritual matters nor in the habit of searching self-examination.

The religious ideas and sentiments they generally imbibed from contact with the followers of Sri Ramakrishna and Vijaykrishna, the two most illustrious God-intoxicated Bengali saints of the last generation, and from what they said and wrote on the basis of the teachings of these great saints. Very few of them had the opportunity of listening to the instructions of Bábáji direct from his lips, for he seldom spoke and never without being earnestly asked. From the teachings of the above-mentioned renowned religious teachers, they were initiated into the *Bhakti* way of thinking. They believed in the Divinity of the Guru, and cherished the idea that the Guru was God incarnate and that through His grace *Mukti* might be attained even without undergoing a systematic course of spiritual self-discipline. They believed that Babaji had infinite *Yogic* power,—even the power for the creation and destruction of the world. Many of them believed that as they got initiation from a *sad-Guru*,—a *Maha'purusha* who realized identity with God—they were sure to attain *Mukti*, in course of three births at most. They further believed that Guru would not accept *Mukti* or merge his individuality in Brahman without delivering the last of his disciples from the bondage of the world.

These fellow-disciples used to come to see me during my stay in Calcutta. They naturally expected that I would give my support to their ideas and sentiments and add to the strength of their convictions. I must confess that in my pre-vedantic period of *sadhana*

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I cherished many of these beliefs and sentiments. But now my vedantic *sadhana* brought about a revolution in my outlook. I could not accept any dogma without adequate evidence,—without external and internal proof. My *Bhakti* way of thinking was superseded by *Jnana* way of thinking in every matter. I could not subscribe to many of their thoughts, beliefs and sentiments. Many of my opinions and arguments were shocking to their preconceived ideas. I could not fulfil the expectation of these affectionate brothers and friends. In some cases we appeared to be poles apart in our views.

They were not vitally concerned with the conception of the Ultimate Reality. They were generally believers in *personal* as well as *impersonal* Brahman, in God *with form* (*sa'ka'ra*) as well as *without form* (*Nira'ka'ra*), in the plurality of *forms* and *names* assumed by the One Supreme Deity. They would not care much, whether one put forward arguments in favour of one philosophical doctrine or another. But there were some beliefs and ideas upon which the solace of their life seemed to be dependent. They could not naturally brook any attack upon them.

Sometimes conversations centred round the spiritual greatness of Babaji. There appeared to be a general impression among these brothers of mine that occult powers were a necessary accompaniment of spiritual advancement. They often measured the greatness of saints by their occult powers. It was natural for them to seek for extraordinary occult powers in Babaji, who was the Lord of their heart, and whom they deified

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in accordance with their conception of Guru. The great devotee, Vijaykrishna Goswami, is reported to have said to his own disciples that Babaji possessed the power of creating and destroying the world in the twinkling of an eye. There was of course no possibility to test the truth of such a statement by reference to the actual life of Babaji. Whether such a power was or could be possessed by any of those unique persons of history, who were looked upon by the society as *Avatars* or Incarnations of God, might quite reasonably be questioned. There was no means to the removal of this doubt, since no one could ever make any exhibition of such a power. If the statement merely meant that the person attained the highest stage of spiritual culture and realised unity with the Supreme Spirit, and that this realisation of unity with the Divine theoretically implied the acquisition of Divine omniscience and omnipotence, then it would be a matter of philosophical speculation and philosophers of different schools might differ on the point.

My brothers accepted the statement on faith. But they were not content with it. They sought for having some experiential proofs of Babaji's supernatural powers. But nobody had ever got any indication of any occult power in him. Some of them, however, adduced certain psychical facts of their own as proofs of the occult powers of Babaji. Many of them saw Babaji in dreams, while he was in his physical body as well as after his leaving it. They interpreted these dreams as Guruji's kind appearance before them. Some of them, having earnestly prayed to Babaji, were miraculously (i. e.

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unexpectedly) saved from some imminent dangers or present difficulties. They attributed it to the miraculous powers of Babaji. Some saw him vividly before their eyes all on a sudden even in the waking state, when they were not even thinking of him. Some were committing some mistake at the time of *Japa*, and suddenly they heard a voice which pointed out the mistake and corrected it. One disciple was on the point of death, and his little daughter saw Babaji sitting with the dying disciple's head on his lap. Some of the disciples reported that they had seen Babaji in dreams, long before they came to him and got initiation from him, and even before they heard his name. Some *sadhus* reported that they saw Babaji bathing in the Brahmakunda of Hardwar at a time when he had already given up his physical body at Gorakhpur. Many such facts were carefully remembered by my brother-disciples and zealously cited as indications of Babaji's supernatural powers, his kindness to his disciples and his still living behind the scene and taking care of them.

When they talked of these things in my presence and glorified Babaji *on the ground of his miraculous powers* indicated by such facts, I would ordinarily protest. I knew that many such so-called facts were the products of a reconstruction by the imagination of credulous emotional people. But without questioning the authenticity of the facts I would assert that they had nothing to do with the real life of Babaji, that they did not in the least prove Babaji's occult powers or his interference with our affairs or his presence amongst us after his death. Our vision of him did not necessarily

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mean his appearance before us. The fact of our prayer to him being followed by fulfilment of any desire or escape from any calamity did not necessarily indicate that he came forward to grant our prayer by the exercise of his miraculous power, nor did it even prove that the prayer was the cause of the result obtained. Our inability to find out the natural cause of a natural event proved only the imperfection of our power of observation and inference, and not in the intervention of a supernatural cause. Our experiences in dreams or reveries or in states of swoons or half-swoons or trances or half-trances could be psychically explained, and they did not prove any interference from any extraneous agency. Our dreams about long-departed relatives or friends did not mean their actual appearances before us or the exercise of any occult powers by them. Visions of future events or unknown persons might be rare in our experience, but they did not in any case imply that these events or persons appeared before our sleeping eyes by any miraculous powers of their own. Thus I could not agree with my brothers in drawing any inference about the occult powers of our most revered Guruji from the instances of the kind cited by them.

I remember that many years ago, before my initiation, when I used to study with zeal and love the works about Ramakrishna Paramhansadev, I used to see him in my dreams. Sometimes I dreamt that Thakkur was talking to me and asking of me some special food -offering (भोग). Now I understand that these experiences were nothing but the objectifications of our latent impressions, similar to other dreams, and that they had

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nothing to do with the powers or glories of Ramkrishnadev himself. I saw such visions on a very few occasions, but I heard from other persons that they had experienced such things in their dreams on many occasions. My esteemed fellow-disciple Jagádádá narrated to me some of his personal experiences, which were stranger than such dreams. He in his earlier life used to practise some processes of Hatha-yoga and made some progress in them. He said,—"When I used to practise Yoga systematically and to devote every day many hours to it, there was a time when I had some extraordinary experiences. While crossing an open field, I thought by chance,—"Let Ramkrishna Paramhansadev appear before me" and at that very instant I found Paramhansadev standing in front of me. I had similar experiences about Trailanga Swámi and the Brahmachári of Bárodi. These were not dreams in the sleeping state, but actual ocular experiences at times when I was wide awake. I could not during that period regard them as hallucinations, because I repeated my wishful thoughts and found them fulfilled on many occasions. Jagada added "Now I (Jagada) have come to realise definitely that those visions were due to some disorder in my brain Here was the confession of a person who himself practised Yoga and who was at that time believed by many to have acquired some occult powers and visions. He was afterwards fully convinced that these were merely psychical facts,—subjective experiences,—due to some peculiar (or what he called 'diseased') states of the mind. They had nothing to do with objective realites. Just as Ramakrishna or Trailinga Swami or Brahmachari had no real connection

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with Jagadada's waking visions, so it was evident that Babaji had no real connection with the experiences which his simple-minded disciples are said to have got about him, whether duriug his life-time or after his death.

I may mention here, and perhaps I mentioned it to my co-disciples, that I myself saw Babaji in dreams or in semi-conscious states on many occasions. One instance I vividly remember now. After Babaji's death I was for some time dwelling alone in the solitary Hathi-Gufa of Mt. Abu. In course of my Sadhana I was seriously perplexed by a knotty problem, which I myself could not solve and for the solution of which no help was available there. I felt the want of Babaji. I thought, if he were living, he would easily solve the problem and rid me of the puzzle. With this thought in the mind I slept. I found in dream that Babaji appeared before me and showed me the way to the solution of the problem.*

In my earler life I would have attributed such incidents to the actual coming down of my merciful Guru. But now I knew that experiences of this sort were obtained by many others, who were not initiated into the spiritual path by any such enlightened Guru. I heard even of some earnest students of mathematics that their knotty mathematical problems were mysteriously solved in this way in dreams. Psychologists and

* To avoid misunderstanding I note here that the problem referred to was the old one (viz. what should I do while in meditation I attain to a void state of mind) and the solution referred to was the repetition of meditation after Vedantic method.

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psycho-analysts suggested various explanations for incidents of this kind. But whatever the explanation might be, I was convinced that nothing about Babaji's personality and power could be ascertained from such dream-experiences of ourselves.

I may cite here one instance in corroboration of my conclusion. A clerk of the A. B. Ry met me a few years back in Calcutta and told me to my utter astonishment "Náthji! you came to me in dream five years ago and advised me to take *mantra*. You did not give me any *mantra* at the time. Two years ago you again appeared before me in the same way and did the same. I have been hunting for you. I went to Gorakhpur, Benares, Hardwar and Rishikesh for your *darshan*. At Rishikesh I was informed by Nibrittinathji that you are in Calcutta now. Now I have come here. Give me *mantra*." He added, "I think, you remember that when in our boyhood we were playing together, you gave me one day a good beating and remarked that a time will come when you will fall down to my feet and accept me as your Guru. Now that time has come. Please give me Mantra." In this case I can assert with certitude that I never went to give him *darshan* and advice in his dream, that I never even thought of him at the time, that his dream-experience, though having reference to me, did not in any way prove my appearance before him or my power to do so. But this gentleman, who had been a friend and playmate of my boyhood, took it for granted that his dream was due to my occult power. I explained to him that I had nothing to do with his dream. I offered to him a psychological

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explanation for such phenomena. I told him that there was no necessity for his being formally initiated by any Guru. He knew various *mantras* from religious books. He might choose any one of them, if he thought necessary, as a help for contemplating on the Divine. I advised him to strengthen his mind by auto-suggestion, to purify his character, to check his needless and degrading thoughts, desires and emotions and concentrate his attention upon the Infinite and Eternal as far as his opportunities allowed.

I can cite another instance. At Karachi I heard from a boy (Tuljá, son of Bulchánd Harirám) that Nibrittinath was the giver of his life. His parents also confimed his statement, saying that the boy was once practically dead and Nibrittinath restored him to them. The fact, as it was stated to me, was that the boy, as a result of protracted illness, was in such a precarious condition that the doctors gave up all hope of his life. With their only son with one foot in the grave, the parents were of course awfully perturbed. They had a high regard for Nibrittinath and they earnestly entreated him to give life to his son. Nibrittinath frankly confessed that he had absolutely no occult power to do anything of the kind. He was as helpless as the parents were. But he was naturally moved by pity and earnestly prayed for the boy's life just as the parent did. Fortunately the boy took a better turn from the next morning and came round in course of time. It would involve a fallacy of *post hoc ergo propter hoc* (After this, therefore, caused by this), if Nibrittinath's good wishes be regarded as the cause of the boy's recovery. But

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the boy's parents, being staunch admirers of Nibrittinath, concluded that by the exercise of some spiritual power he miraculously restored life to their practically dead child. They ascribed to their beloved *Sadhu* a power which he did not possess, and a work which he did not perform.

I cited some such cases to my brothers in Calcutta to show that people, led by admiration for their Gurus and revered saints, often attribute to them miraculous powers and works, with which they have no connection whatsoever.

With regard to our most revered Guruji, I would tell them that so far as I had opportunities to study his life I found no ground for drawing any such inference that he was in possession of superhuman miraculous powers. When people in distress sought for his mercy, he would advise them to adopt effective natural means for its redress. When his admirers suffering from prolonged illness asked for his intervention, he would gently tell them to seek the help of good physicians. He was never found to relieve the sufferings of the people, however devoted they might be to him and however earnestly they might beg for his mercy, by any word of his mouth or fiat of his will. He himself suffered from physical ailments, which he did not cure by the exercise of his occult power.

Though not subscribing to the views current among my fellow-disciples about the supernatural powers of Babaji, I had observed in his life some unique features, for which I had the highest admiration and reverence

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for him. He appeared to me to be the perfect master of all his thoughts, desires and feelings, which I felt so much difficulty in bringing under control during my *sadhana*. His mind always appeared to be in a state of perfect calmness and tranquillity. Though he was in charge of the management of a monastery and an estate, though he had to come in contact with various sorts of people and to live in the midst of varying circumstances, his eyes seemed to be always inwardly directed, his mind was never found to be perturbed, he seemed to be constantly dwelling in some far-off solitary region of peace and contentment. He seemed to have no lust or ambition, no anger or malice, no care or anxiety, no pride or hatred, no fear or dread. Though he was adored and admired by so many men and women, he was not found to be in the least elated or puffed up by it. He appeared to have no sense of ego,—no sense of 'me' and 'mine'. He had love for all, but there was no emotion in his love. He was kind to all, but there was no restless effort on his part to remove the sufferings of the people. Praise and blame, adoration and abhorrence, life and death, appeared to be all the same to him. Living in the world, he seemed to be always living above the world. Dealing with the finites, he appeared to be always in communion with the Infinite. Connected with the transitory things and events of the physical domain, he appeared to be continually in touch with the Eternal. These were the extraordinary features of his life, which I found in very few of the innumerable *sadhus* I came across. In point of knowledge he would generally behave in such a way that he knew

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little or nothing. He had very little book-learning. He had no philosophical training. But if any questions with regard to abstruse truths were put to him, it would appear, inspite of his unparalled reticence, that he had a penetrating intelligence and a thorough grasp of the ultimate conclusions of philosophy. He would give his answers in the simplest and clearest aphoristic form. There was no sectarian bigotry or narrowness in him. He was above all kinds of pettiness. He was a charming personality. His very appearance would captivate the hearts of men, and he actually captivated my heart at first sight.

Apart from this unique grandeur of his personality, I found no supernatural power in him, and, I may add, if I had found in him any expression of what is ordinarily known as supernatural power, it would not add to my reverence for him. The so-called supernatural powers had no necessary connection with spiritual enlightenment. Persons without spiritual illumination might acquire some occult powers by means of certain specific Yogic processes; while persons with full consciousness of the identity of their individual selves with the Universal Self, Brahman, might not acquire any such power. From the spiritual view-point the latter was superior to the former.

I had to protest against another opinion which I found current among my religious brothers, but for which I found no support either in the teachings of Babaji or in any authoritative scripture. They believed that Babaji, having accepted them as his disciples, undertook

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the full responsibility for their spiritual perfection and that he would deliver them from bondage in course of three births. They got this idea from some extraneous sources, particularly from the teachings of Bejoy Krishan Goswami, who exercised at that time a great influence upon the spiritual outlook of the religious-minded educated Bengali youngmen in general. The question was put to Babaji in my presence by some disciples. He answered in his characteristic way without any ambiguity in his language that there was no such rule that all the disciples of a *Sad-guru* should be emancipated from the world in course of a definite number of births. He added,—some might attain *mukti* within this life, and some might require two or three or a far larger (*bahu*) number of lives for attaining it; the progress would depend upon the past spiritual advancement (*adhikara*) and the present spiritual efforts (*sadhana*) of the disciples themselves; the mere fact that they got initiation from a *sadguru* (a spiritually enlightened teacher) did not entitle them to the attainment of Mukti within a specified period. With regard to the responsibility of the Guru, he said that Guru might give instruction and render help to the spiritual aspirants, but he could not convert *Sadhana* and *siddhi* into a palatable liquid substance and pour it with his own hand into the mouth of the disciples घोटकर पीला देगा क्या ? In order to attain their desired object, he said, the disciples must exert themselves, must discipline their body and mind in accordance with the instruction of the Guru, must ardently engage themselves in Sadhana. Why should persons, not

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willing to go through the troubles of Sadhana, he added, go to any Guru and take initiation at all'? With regard to the belief which was cherished by many of his simple-minded disciples that the Guru takes the entire charge of the disciples' spiritual welfare, Babajee sometimes said that the disciples may cultivate such a faith in the Guru and discipline their lives accordingly, if such a faith would add to their ardour for Sadhana and give them strength and hope for advancing in the path which was instructed to them by the Guru. Such ardour for Sadhana would be the real test of the sincerity of their faith in and love for the Guru. On no occasion in course of his teachings did Babajee assert or even tacitly admit that the acceptance of the full responsibility for the spiritual welfare and salvation of the disciples by the Guru was a real fact. A real fact did not depend for its validity upon the subjective faith or want of faith on the part of anybody. If the responsibility of the Guru were real fact, there would be no necessity for giving advice regarding faith which was merely a subjective attitude on the part of the disciples. Babajee, in answer to question about the responsibility of the Guru, spoke about faith and never accepted responsibility as a matter of fact. What he meant was that faith in the Guru had a subjective value in the path of spiritual Sadhana, but he never held out any hopes that he would release the disciples from worldly bondage and confer Mukti on them by the exercise of any power of himself, irrespective of the quality and quantity of the spiritual endeavours of the disciples. Babaji's instruction left no room for spiritual

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lethargy. He never encouraged any false belief and never gave any false hopes. He always wished that the disciples should cultivate independence of spirit, freedom of thought and action, strength and vigour of life and courage of conviction. He wanted them to perform their noble worldly duties, so far as necessary, with strength and vigour and to do them as services to the Lord of their life; and he likewise wanted them to devote themselves to their special spiritual Sadhana with fervour and enthusiasm. He instructed them never to entertain any weakness either in the field of worldly duties or in the field of moral and spiritual self-discipline. If faith and self-surrender were to be cultivated, it must be dynamic faith and dynamic self-surrender,—faith and self-surrender of the strong and not of the weak,—faith and self-surrender, not from a sense of self-diffidence and helplessness, but from whole-hearted love and devotion. Thus even while giving instruction on *Bhakti-Sadhana*, Babaji was not prepared to countenance such doctrines and beliefs, which weak-minded worldly men liked to cherish only to hoodwink their inner spiritual urge and to justify their lethargy in the matter of *Sadhana*.

With respect to *Mantra-Sakti* (power of the *mantra*) or *Na'ma-sakti* (power of the Divine Name), I would tell the audience,—what I told I believed to represent the intention of Babaji,—that *Mantra or Na'ma*, as a combination of words or letters or sounds, had no power of its own, nor did it acquire any magical power simply because it was whispered into the ear by an enlightened person. But I admitted that if *Mantra* or *Nama* was

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taken as a formula or a word for reminding the Sadhaka of the Spiritual Reality or rousing the spiritual consciousness in him, and if it was recollected or mentally uttered again and again with the contemplation of the Truth signified by it, then the truth-consciousness might gradually become more and more dynamic and there might be progressive transformation of the mind. The attainment of such a result required prolonged practice. But the muttering of *mantra* or *nama* and the contemplation on the Truth, must be accompanied by a continued earnest endeavour for the purification of conduct and character, for the suppression of the worldly and ignoble thoughts, desires, passions and propensities, for the concentration of attention upon the supreme spiritual ideal of life and for a thorough change of outlook upon the universe. Without such systematic and all-round sadhana, mere *mantra-japa* or *nama-japa* would be of no avail. Mechanical repetition of a few words was practically useless from the spiritual point of view. When Babaji spoke of faith in and devotion to the Divine Name, he evidently meant whole-hearted concentration oi thoughts, feelings and desires upon the Divine Reality signified by the Name.

The view-point from which I looked upon spiritual life and the way in which I interpreted the life and teachings of Babaji were not palatable to those brothers, who fondly believed in a short-cut to *Mukti* and cherished hopes for getting rid of the sorrowful world without any serious and systematic exertion on their part. Many of them tried to rest contented with the thought that I lost faith in and reverence for the Guru

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and that they were truly loyal to him. Some of them shunned my company. That of course was not a matter of much concern to me. My principle was that I should speak what I knew to be the truth to those who approached me and put questions to me and that I should not deviate from the path of the truth out of regard for the feelings and opinions of others, however near and dear they might personally be to me. The result was a sort of estrangement between me and many of my fellow-disciples.

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CHAPTER XXII

A Trip to Kashmir and Amarna'th

From Calcutta I went to Benares and from Benares to Kashmir. I halted at a Natha-math called Pirkho at Jammu. The Mahant enquired about my Guru. When he was informed that I was a disciple of Baba Gambhirnatha, he could hardly believe it. Babaji was known to him not only as a great saint, but also as the head of the Gorakhnath Temple at Gorakhpur and the master of a big estate. It was difficult for him to believe that a disciple of Baba Gambhirnath should travel as a petty beggar with such a shabby and dirty rag round his waist. "What proof is there", he enquired, "that you are a *nath*?" I could not show him the sign of the Natha sect which Babaji had given me viz. the garland of woolen thread with the pipe hanging from it, for I had parted with it when leaving Abu mount. I said to him boldy, "I have come to you for food; if you are ready to give it, well and good; if not, I bid you good bye." At this he consented to give me shelter and food for some time and showed me at my request a solitary place which was convenient for my meditation. I took my seat there and went on with my Sadhana. I was given shelter as a beggar and treated as such. The Mohant did not care to look at me or to utter a word to me. His attitude was one of indifference, if not of disgust and hatred. He was the master of the *math*, while I was a mere hanger-on. The food was cooked by a Sadhu; who most carelessly cooked it and served it to me. I had to wait for a long time to get even a small quantity of water in my water-pot. In spite of

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such behaviour I stayed there shamelessly for a month. A *sadhu* requires a training in shamelessness for the protection of his physical body. After one month of my stay in the *math* the attention of some gentlemen of the town was perchance attracted towards me. One of them talked about me to some big officials,—a minister of the Punach State, a secretary and a judge. Curiosity perhaps brought them to me. They put questions and I answered in my usual way. They seemed to be highly pleased with my discourses. They came again. They invited me to their houses. The mohant saw that such big men saw me again and again, took me earnestly to their houses and became in some degree my admirers. His attitude was changed as a matter of course. He began to treat me very cordially. He often called me affectionately to his side and held prolonged conversations with me. Suddenly I became an honoured guest at the *math*. The cook was transformed. He began to render services to me as to a great saint. I laughed within myself. I was reminded of an old saying that the status of a prostitute is judged by that of the persons visiting her. The same is the case with the *sadhus*. Having stayed there for a short period there-after, I went to Srinagar.

At Srinagar I stopped a few days at the Sankar math and then went to Brahmánanda áshram, where I put up for about a month. Many sadhus had assembled there for starting on a pilgrimage to Amarnáth. A large number of them had come from Bengal and the United Provinces. I talked with them on various topics. I found that most of them had their brains filled with current sectarian ideas and very few had the inclination or capacity for

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freely thinking on the ultimate problems. When I gave out my mind to them, some of them were astonished and considered my ideas revolutionary, and some ridiculed me and said that Soham Swami's ghost took possession of my mind. There I heard various descriptions of the glories of Amarnáth. It was reported that snow naturally takes there the form of *Siva-linga* and that it grows gradually like a living body. I had a curiosity to see the place which was regarded as so sacred by the Hindus in general and also to test with my own eyes the correctness of the reports. I joined the company and undertook the difficult journey.

Pandit Thákurdas (Secretary), who had felt an attraction for me at Pirkho happened at Srinagar at that time. He was a man of position and influence. I found that a good arrangement might be made through him for the journey to Amarnath. I asked the Bengali Sadhus to combine into a party. They were twenty in number. Panditji took me to the manager of the Dharmáda department (the department in charge of religious affairs) and arranged for tents and food for our party. The judge of Jammu, Sukdayál, who also used to see me at Pirkho, was going on a pilgrimage to Amarnath. I met him on the way. He invited me to take food with him daily in course of the journey. I could not accept the invitation on the ground that there were so many sadhus with me, and that it would be inhuman on my part to enjoy any special advantage, leaving them behind. When we reached next place of stoppage Pahelgao, the same evening, the Judge approached me again and offered to take the entire charge of supplying food-stuff to all the sadhus of my party

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throughout the journey and back. He specially appointed two Brahmin cooks for serving us. In spite of all these arrangements, sufferings from cold and rain and from the difficulties of the hilly, snowy and precipitous path could not be avoided. Having undergone all the troubles, we somehow reached the sacred spot.

As soon as we got sight of Amarnáth–Siva, the sadhus and pilgrims forgot the troubles and shouted in joy, as if they obtained the ultimate object of their strenuous quest and their *sadhana* was crowned with success. They approached the Deified Snow with a humble reverential and delightful spirit and seemed to see Siva Incarnate there. Now I tell my own experience of Amarnáth. Mine were not the eyes of a simple–minded pious believer. Nor were my eyes trained to see God in all the striking natural phenomena. I had already passed through various experiences, and my mind was no longer at a stage in which it could be duped by the false propaganda of the Pándás (the interested priests of the places of pilgrimage) and the quotations from the texts of religious books devoted to the glorification of imaginary Gods and Godesses. To me Amarnath was a product of nature, pure and simple. It was an accumulation of snow, due to excessive cold. Snow, having entered into a natural cave, was deposited here and there in different sizes and shapes. The biggest mass was worshipped as Amarnath,—the embodiment of Siva. It was not strictly of the *Linga*–form. When the snow–fall are large, Amarnath grew in size. In case of small snow–fall, Amarnath could scarcely be distinguished from other masses of snow Heat would melt it, just as it would melt any other mass of snow. I got no experience of Siva in Amarnath.

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Note on Siva-linga

The worship of *S'iva-linga* is most widely prevalent throughout the length and breadth of India, and that from very ancient times. It is not confined to any particular sect or to the upholders of a particular cult. It is the universal form of S'iva-worship. Descriptions of the bodily features of S'iva, like those of other Deities, are found in the scriptures, and devotees are instructed occasionally to meditate on Him in the light of these descriptions. But the actual worship of the complete image of S'iva is scarcely to be found anywhere in India. This is a striking fact which cannot fail to attract the attention of a truth-seeker. Vishnu also is universally worshipped in the form of what is called *S'a'lagra'ma-S'ila'*—a piece of stone slightly different in shape from *S'iva-linga*,—and it is generally known as *Vishnu-linga*. But the worship of Vishnu in the forms of various human and super-human images is equally prevalent. Moreover, Vishnu is worshipped in the forms of his *Avata'ras*, of Whom Krishna and Ra'ma are the most popular. Siva, however, is neither worshipped in the form of any *Avata'ra* nor in the form of a full-bodied Deity. He is universally worshipped in the featureless form, viz. *Siva-linga*. Has it got any special significance? It is a problem to religious truth-seekers.

Many western scholars and their unthinking eastern disciples offer a plausible solution to the problem. They assert that it is a kind of *Phallicism*, reminiscent of the crude religious self-expression of the primitive minds. It consists in the worship of the *Phallus* or the image

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of the penis as symbolising the *generative power* in nature. Such phallic cults were prevalent also among other primitive races of the world. The term *linga* (one of the secondary and popular meanings of which is the generative organ) and the shape of the small stone column worshipped as *S'iva-linga* apparently lend support to this view. Several *pauranic* fictions, which are products of unrefined minds without any religious insight, and some of which are creations of the propagandists of the anti-Saivaite schools, are cited for confirming the view. Scholars with deeper erudition and understanding, however, donot accept this view. Winternitz, for example, in agreement with some other reputed indologists, asserts that "*The linga-cult certainly bears no trace of any phallic cult of an obscene nature.*" Their explanation is that "The Linga, generally in the form of a small stone column, is for the worshippers of S'iva only a symbol of the *productive and creative principle* of Nature as embodied in S'iva". (Winternitz's History of Indian Literature, Vol I. pg. 569).

To the earnest truth-seekers this explanation also seems grossly inadequate to solve the problem. A most remarkable fact which has to be carefully noticed is that the vast majority of the Hindu *Sannyasins* and *Yogins* who are imbued with the ideals of *renunciation* and *concentration*, are devoted to S'iva as the Supreme Object of their worship, and they all adore the linga-form of Siva for the outer (*bahiranga*) practice of their devotion and for the development of their spiritual mood. The aim of every genuine *Sannya'sin* and *Yogin* is to completely renounce all the changing diversities

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of the world and to concentrate their entire attention upon the changeless unity of the self-luminous Spirit. S'iva is conceived by them as the perfect embodiment of the eternally realised Ideal of renunciation and self-concentration. He is spoken of as *Tya'gis'wara* (the supreme Lord of all *tya'gins* or *sannya'sins*) and *Yogis'wara* (the supreme Lord of all *Yogins*). Allegorically He is described as dwelling in *S'mas'a'na* or the cremation-ground or the abode of the dead, in which all differences disappear and merge in the unity of pure Existence or pure non-Existence. He always dwells in Himself, forgetful of all the diversities of the cosmic order. He reminds the devotees of the eternally transcendent character of the Self.

Moreover, from the popular Hindu point of view, the three Divine Personalities, viz. Brahmá, Vishnu and S'iva, represent the three aspects of Divinity in relation to the cosmic order. Brahmá is conceived as the *creator*, i. e. He evolves out of the unity of ultimate Existence countless forms of finite and trasitory, unconscious and conscious, existences. He is the Father of all the diversities of the world. Vishnu is conceived as the Divine Sustainer, i. e. He regulates and maintains all the created diversities as a mutually related harmonious system. He is the Administrator of all the diverse orders of existences created by Brahmá. He is the Preserver of unity in the midst of the plurality. S'iva is conceived as the Divine Destroyer, i. e. He dissolves the plurality into unity. All finite and temporary existences progressively advance towards *destruction*, which is their ultimate goal, in which they lose their mutually different

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characteristics and are merged in one formless Existence, which is as good as Non-Existence. S'iva is the Lord of this process of destruction. From Unity to Plurality, Systematic Organisation of Plurality, and from Plurality back to Unity,—this is the cosmic process. The entire process is presided over and controlled by One Supreme Spirit, Who is accordingly conceived as having three-fold functions in relation to this process. The first function is represented by Brahmá, the second by Vishnu and the third by S'iva. This is the general Hindu conception of *Trinity*.

The religiously-minded people of the Hindu society are traditionally divided into two classes,—viz. those who have their faces towards the world-system and those who have their faces against it. The former are called followers of *Prabritti-ma'rga* (the path of advancement in the world), and the latter are called followers of *Nibritti-marga* (the path of renunciation of the world). The former naturally become worshippers of Brahmá and Vishnu, and particularly Vishnu, Who is the benevolent Ruler of the world-system, devotion to Whom is expected to be rewarded with peace, harmony, love, unity and blissfulness within the cosmic order, loving self-surrender to Whom is expected to emancipate the individual devotees from all cares and anxieties and fears, from all sorrows and wants and bondages and limitations, *without depriving them of their individuality*. On the other hand, those who are sick of the world, those who think that every kind of relation with the diversified world is an evil and is a source of bondage and sorrow, those who are eager for renouncing

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all sorts of connections with the diversities and for the realisation of absolute unity beyond this world,—these votaries of *Nibritti-ma'rga* are naturally inclined to adopt Siva,—the Supreme Destroyer,—as the supreme Ideal of their spiritual aspiration and to be devoted to him. It is on this account that the *Yogins* and *Sannya'sins*, whose spiritual urge leads them to *Nibritti-ma'rga*, are found to be adherents of the S'iva cult.

This history of Hinduism shows that there have at times been bitter controversies between the advocates of *Prabritti-ma'rga* and those of *Nibritti-ma'rga*—between the advocates of *Karma* and those of *Jna'na*,—and that the former have sometimes declared crusades against the worship of S'iva and the advancement of the S'iva-ideal (i. e. ideal of *Nibritti* and *Jnana*) in the society. The ancient story of the revolt of Daksha-Prajápati (a son of Brahmá, a votary of Vishnu, and a representative of *Prabritti-ma'rga*) against S'iva and his final subdual by Him is a well-known illustration of the conflict between *Prabritti-ma'rga* and *Nibritti-ma'rga* in the Hindu society and the progressive self-assertion of the ideal of *Nibritti* and *Jnana* in the society. Many ugly things have been spoken and many obscene stories have been invented by the over-zealous advocates of *Prabritti-ma'rga* and the so-called *Karmapanthis* and *Bhakti-panthis* against the character of S'iva and His devotees. But the fact remains that in the enlightened circle of spiritual aspirants the conception of S'iva is associated with the ideas of Renunciation, Detachment from the social order, Destruction of finite and transitory existences of the world, Absorption in the enjoyment

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of the transcendent character of the Self, Freedom from all bondage and all rights and obligations, Absence of all formalisms and caste-distinctions in His worship, etc. He is the destroyer of *Ka'ma*, the god of lustful desires, and the Slayer of *Tripura'sura*, the Demon of Ego, dwelling in the three *puras* or worlds, viz. the gross, the subtle and the causal.

Now, is it reasonable to suppose that the religious men who conceived such a God for the fulfilment of the spiritual demand of their nature imagined or accepted either a *phallus* or a generative organ or something implying "the productive and creative principle of Nature" as a symbol for this Supreme Object of their devotion and worship? Can it be reasonally believed that the *yogins* and *Sannyasins*, who from the very beginning of their spiritual career learn to regard the world-creation as an evil and the sexual impulse as the worst of all hindrances to spiritual progress and who aim at rooting out the sexual propensity from their nature and all world-ward thoughts and desires from their mind, should as a part of their spiritual self-discipline worship a symbol, which is associated with the idea of generation or creation and is likely to keep the sex-consciousness awake in the mind? Again, is it reasonable to suppose that the God of Destruction,—the God who is thought of as the cause of the dissolution of the world of diversities,—should be represented by a symbol, which obviously implies the creative power and action of God? Can the advocates of *Nibritti-ma'rga* be expected to worship with veneration a symbol, which obviously idealises the creativity of God,—the *prabritti* of God

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for the production of diversities? If the word *Linga* and the form given to it really meant the Creative or Productive Power of Divinity in the minds of those who originated the word *S'iva-linga* and imagined the particular physical form for conveying its underlying idea, this word and this form would have been most appropriately applied to Brahmá or Praja'pati, who was universally conceived as the creator-God,—as representing the creative aspect of the Supreme Spirit. It is most improbable that of the three Supreme Gods of the Hindus, embodying the three fundamental aspects of the Absolute Spirit in relation to the world-system, the Destructive God—the God of the dissolution of the world,—be worshipped by them as essentially the creative God and that a symbol implying the creative principle should be specially adopted for worshipping Him, and not for worshipping either the creative God Brahmá or the Sustaining and Governing God Vishnu.

There is ample reason for supposing that the idea of Fatherhood was associated with and became prominent in the idea of S'iva later on in course of the development of the religious thought of the various classes of devotees, when S'iva was conceived as the Lord of Prakriti, which is the Material Cause of the universe and as such the Mother of all phenomenal existences. The conception of the union or wedding between S'iva and Umá—Purusha and Prakriti,—and of the Fatherhood of S'iva (Spirit) and the Motherhood of Umá (Prakriti) must have been the result of a compromise between *Prabritti-ma'rga* and *Nibritti-ma'rga* and between the *S'akta cult* and the *S'aiva cult*. Now,

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if Siva-linga be supposed to be the symbol of the Fatherhood and Motherhood of S'iva and S'akti, even then it is psychologically impossible that there should be any reference to the sex-organs in the symbol, since pious children never think of the sex-organs of the Father and the Mother in couse of their culture of filial devotion. Moreover, devotional Saivism, though full of deep and noble sentiments of personal love for the Divine, is seldom found to degenerate into erotic love with its pathological symptoms, as it is found among some sections of the Vaishnavas. Hence S'iva-linga can never be reasonably supposed to refer to the sexual organ of S'iva.

What then must have been the original significance of *Linga*? The problem troubled me for some time, particularly because during the early period of my spiritual career I was very fond of S'iva and I used to sit for hours together face to face with S'iva-linga. In the presence of the *Linga* the idea of its being the symbol for a sexual organ would of course never arise in my mind, and I think it never arises in the mind of any earnest worshipper. As my truth-seeking spirit and my capacity for reasoning developed, thoughts about the deeper significance of this symbol sometimes occupied my intellect. I became gradually convinced that in its original significance the *Linga* had no connection with the generative organ or with the creative power of Siva. Linguistically also, the term *Linga* did not primarily mean the generative organ,—it was not a synonym for *S'is'na* or *upastha*, which in Sanskrit meant the particular sense-organ. The word *Linga* merely meant

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a *sign* or a *symbol* or a *distinguishing feature* of a thing. Whatever pointed by virtue of some kind of relation to the existence of something else or awakened by implication the idea of something else in the mind is, according to the primary meaning of the term, a *linga* of the latter. Thus, *dhuma* (smoke) is a *linga* of fire, a particular form of dress is a *linga* of a particular profession (as yellow *kaupin* of a sannyasin), a particular sense–organ is a *linga* of a particular sex, a particular effect is a *linga* of a particular cause, a particular image or object is a *linga* of a particular Deity, a part of a thing is a *linga* for the whole thing, one thing is a *linga* for another with which it is always associated in idea, and so on. Again, a particular expresssion of the eyes or the lips, a particular gesture of the hands, a particular posture of the body are *linga* for particular states of the mind. Figuratively, some particular visible object is a *linga* or emblem for some invisible reality or some mental concept. It is in such a wide sense that the term *Linga* is generally used in Sanskrit. Only in special cases, with reference to special contexts, it is used in a special sense.

Now, from very early times the religious men of India formed ideas about Invisible or Supersensuous Realities and conceptions about spiritual ideals of life and associated these ideas and concepts with visible symbols (*lingas*). The votaries of *Nibritti–ma'rga* associated the Supreme Ideal of their life and the Highest Object of their worship and meditation with a *Flame of Light* or a *Pillar of Light* (*Jyotih–S'ikha'* or *Jyotih–Stambha*). Light was a symbol (*linga*) for True knowledge,

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which destroyed the Darkness of Ignorance and emancipated the votaries from all kinds of bondage and sorrow born of Ignorance. The shining flame of *Tattva-Jna'na* (Truth-realisation) burnt away all desires and passions, all attachments and aversions, all worldward tendencies and impulses. All the finite and transitory diversities of the world of sensuous experience were like combustible materials dissolved into absolute unity by the burning fire of spiritual experience. Spiritual self-realisation might figuratively be spoken of as *Maha'-S'mas'a'na* (the great cremation Ground) or *Maha'-Pralaya* (the state of total dissolution), in which all phenomenal diversities are burnt into nothingness and the Self alone shines in Its own self-luminosity. To the enlightened worshippers of S'iva, He is the eternal Ideal of True knowledge, the Ideal of perfect Self-realisation, the Ideal of absolute liberation from the bondage of worldly diversities, the Ideal Destroyer of all differences and Enjoyer of the perfect unity of the Self, and as such, He is *Jnanis'wara, Yogis'wara, Tya'gis-wara, Atma'ra'ma, Swayamjyotih.*

Accordingly, these worshippers, adopted a *Flame or Pillar of Light* as an appropriate symbol (*linga*) for S'iva. In the religious scriptures this symbol is called *Jyotirlinga* (symbol in the form of *Jyoti* or light). The S'aiva Yogins are in the habit of keeping a light (*Jyoti*) burning before them, while they practise Yoga and meditation. They testify that such a serene flame of non-material light is actually experienced within the body with the advancement of concentration. For the popularisation of the worship of S'iva in the form of a

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flame or column of Light, Stone or Earth was substituted for Light, *Jyotirlinga* was presented to the public and permanently established in sacred places in the form of *Prastara-linga* (stone-symbol) or *Mrid-linga* (earth-symbol). The shape of the *linga* or symbol of S'iva is everywhere similar to that of a flame or column of light, gradually pointed at the upper end. *Siva-linga* is thus originally not a symbol for the creative or productive power and tendency of the Divine, but a symbol for perfect self-knowledge and self-fulfilment of the Divine and hence secondarily for renunciation and world-destruction. Siva-linga is generally established in *S'was'á'na* and hills and forests, but many of such *s'was'á'nas* have in course of time grown into big cities (e. g. Benares), and the hills and forests into sacred places of public pilgrimage.

Thus our conclusion is that historically as well as essentially Siva-linga (the symbol of Siva) is a column of *light*, and not a generative organ. When with the development of metaphysical thought Siva was conceived as the Soul of the universe, the column of light represented Siva and the base on which the light burnt was supposed to represent the universe. It was conceived as the symbol of the Soul eternally shining on the material universe.—the One Supreme Spirit shining on the world of non-luminous shadowy phenomenal diversities. When Siva was identified with Upanishadic *Brahman*, and the Prakriti of Sánkhya was conceived as the Power (Sakti) of Brahman eternally and inalienably related to Him, this conception was figuratively described as the union or wedding of Prakriti (in the

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form of Umá, having various names) with Siva or Purusha, and hence Siva and Prakriti were imagined as the Father and the Mother of the universe. Accordingly the meaning of the symbol also was further developed. The column of Light was supposed as representing the Purusha—the eternal paternal principle, and its base as Prakriti—the eternal maternal principle of the universe. Thus the *Jyotih* stood for the self-luminous Spirit and its dark base (called *Yoni-pitha*) stood for the principle or power which veiled its self-luminous character and produced all the diversities of spatio-temporal existences under its shadow. The union of the *Jyotih* and the *Yonipitha* indicates a compromise between *Nibritti-marga* and *Prabritti-marga*.

The *Yogins* and *Sannyasins* stuck to this symbol (linga), since in their view it was the most universal and non-sectarian symbol of the Absolute Reality, the Supreme Spirit. It is not an image with specific features, differentiated sense-organs, particularised forms of manifestation. It is neither a male nor a female figure. It is not a particular God or Goddess. It is a unique representation of the One, Who, in the words of *Svetaswatara Upanishad*, has no body or senses, no equal or superior, but is eternally endowed with supreme Power manifesting itself in diverse ways and with perfect knowledge, potency and activity inherent in His transcendent nature. This symbol stands midway between the Formless and the innumerable particularised forms in which the Spirit is conceived and imagined by different classes of worshippers. Hence all classes of Hindus worship this featureless Form as the universal

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symbol for the Supreme Spirit. This is also the case with *Vishnu-linga-S'a'lagra'm*,—the details of the significance of which I shall not enter into in this connection.

I myself gave up symbol-worship long ago, as the readers have noticed, on the ground that the symbol was not the Deity and that no material representation of the Spirit was possible. (See pages 77-78, 235, 252-254). It was only my spirit of search for truth in every department of my experience that led me to reflect upon the deeper significance of *Siva-linga*, particularly because many wrong and mutually contradictory notions were prevalent with regard to the meaning of this symbol. I present to the readers what appears to me the most reasonable explanation, consistent with the facts about this form of worship.

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CHAPTER XXIII

Moving For Place to Place

From Kashmir I returned to Benares. I was advised to give a trial to the system of treatment of the widely known Sadhu, Tibbati Baba. I went to his Palitpur Asram in the district of Burdwan. But he was at that time in Calcutta for healing himself by the homeopathic treatment of Dr. Unain, who had failed in my case in the previous year. However, I went to Calcutta and resided at Chetlá with the Tibbati Baba. He appeared to me illiterate but possessed of vast experience. He was sincere in his dealings. His medicine could not produce the desired effect upon my chronic disease. I had to leave Calcutta disappointed. During my stay in Calcutta I twice met the famous Pandit Lakshman Sastri Drávidi and had long conversation with him on various vedantic topics.

From Calcutta I took a long journey to Amarkantha the source of the Narmada. It is a hill, six miles from the nearest station. It contains dense forest abounding with tigers and snakes. The place has for a long time been regarded as sacred by the Hindu saints and it is favourite with those who are devoted to deep meditation. I went to Amarkantha with the same purpose in view. I took up my abode in Rámasnehi Ba'ba''s *a'sram*. I used to leave the *asram* every day at 5 a. m., enter into the dense forest, remain absorbed in meditation for about six hours in some lonely spot and return to tho *asram* for the midday meal at about 11 a. m.

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After taking meals I would again go into the forest and return in the evening. I followed this programme regularly for a period of five or six months.

I remember to have had some ludicrous experiences here. One day while I was sitting all alone in the dense forest in a meditative mood, I heard a man shouting at a short distance from me. From the voice it could be inferred that the man was terribly frightened. But I could not guess the cause of his fear. After some time the same voice was heard loudly narrating a story to the cowherds. So far as I could understand, the purport of the story was this. In the dense part of the forest, a ferocious tiger was about to fall upon him. Though terrified, he gave a hard blow to the tiger on the forehead. The tiger, being frightened, fled away. He escaped with his life. I was not in a mood to pay any special attention to the matter. I came out of the forest in my usual hour. After a few days I was told by a person "Swamiji, you are known to the villagers as Ba'ghiya Ba'ba' (tiger-Sadhu)". I enquired of the reason for this. He said,—"you are a Bengali sadhu and Bengalis are reputed for their magical powers. It is reported that when you go to the forest you take the form of a tiger." On further enquiry he referred to some persons from whom he got the report. I had the curiosity to find out the original source of this ludicrous story. It was traced ultimately to a girl of thirteen. "Why do you call me Baghiya Baba," I accosted her one day. "What have I done?" she answered, "I was told so by a Brahmin cowherd." Now I discovered that this Brahmin cowherd was the man whose shouting I had heard

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a few days back in the forest. This simple-mined cowherd had been terrified by the sight of a tiger and when afterwards he had seen me coming out of the same forest, he had with his fine inborn knowledge of logic concluded that the tiger must have been no other than myself. He was so sure of his conclusion, that he felt no hesitation in giving it wide publicity, as a fact of his direct experience. The news of my occult powers was so widely circulated that once an elderly *sadhu* of good name and fame (Phala'ha'ri Baba) approached me and entreated me to teach him some processes of acquiring occult powers. I of course flatly denied that I had any such powers or knew any such processes.

I remember another interesting incident of Amarkantha. One day on my way to the forest at noon I took rest in a lonely Siva temple. I converted my blanket into a pillow and lay down stark naked. My legs happened to be in the direction of Siva. The temple was then in possession of a *Na'ga' Sadhu*, who remained always naked. He came there and found me also naked like himself. This enraged him. He sternly reprimanded me, saying "what right have you, who belong to the *Natha* sect, to remain naked in this way ? I am a Muni Swami and it is my right to remain naked." I explained to him that the question of right did not arise in this case, that the temple was completely solitary without any human being to look upon me, that I had nothing but the blanket to cover my body and that for the sake of a little convenience I put it under my head and was taking rest for a short while on my way to the dense forest. He would not listen to my arguments. He got

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furious and began to hurl all sorts of bad epithets upon me. I found that a submissive attitude would not calm him down. I got up and challenged him for an open fight. This had the desired effect. Giving up his threatening attitude, he asked me never to enter his temple in future. "I must come every day," I said in reply. I went about my usual business. But next day I again came to temple and lay down in a similar way, without however putting my legs in the direction of Siva. The naked sadhu was not found so furious this day. He was perhaps afraid that if he ill-treated me I might assume the form of a tiger and fall upon him. He however made bold to say "Well, Nath, you are proud of your *siddhi* (occult power); but I also have got some power; if you assume one form, I shall assume another." I simply laughed at his empty vaunt, born of inner nervousness which he wanted to hid. Readers may now imagine how unfounded stories about *siddhi* or yogic powers of *sadhus* get currency among the people. May not many of the siddhis we hear about be of like nature with mine ! If any reader happens to go to Amarkantha, he may even now hear stories about Baghiya Baba.

From Amarkantha I went to Bombay. I had not a single pice with me, so I had to travel without ticket. During the journey I got no food. When I saw other persons taking their meals, I felt a longing within me for getting a share. But as they showed no willingness to give me any, I could not overcome my shyness and beg for it, inspite of the pangs of hunger. Such experiences are not however rare in the life of a *sadhu*. At Bombay I chose to live at Ba'lakeshwar. The day-time

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I would pass in meditation on any big stone on the sea-beach. At night I would take rest at some Dharamsa'la. For food I would look to the mercy of some householder in the neighbourhood. The inner pleasure of meditation renders all the troubles of physical life bearable to an earnest spiritual aspirant.

Here I chanced to meet with a Bengali Vaishnava Sadhu. He was a '*Pujari*' in some *a'srama* there. One day he told me with tearful eyes,—"Swamiji, I became a sadhu twelve years back. But I repent it now. Having led a sadhu-life for such a long period, I am convinced that my life has been wasted. I have been useless to the society as well to myself. I have got no scent of the ideal, for the sake of which I renounced the world. But I have to depend on the mercy of others,—mercy mixed with hatred,—for my own bare livelihood. This is a miserable life indeed! Had I not left my home, I could at least honourably earn my living and could also reasonably expect to be of some service to the family and the society." I felt that his was not an exceptional case among the *sadhus*. He gave expression to the inner heart of many a *sadhu* in our country. Perhaps the majority of those who move about in the sadhu-garb are without any spiritual attainments worth the name; they are burdens upon the householders, who deriving no moral or spiritual or economic benfit from them look down upon them and throw some morsels of bread towards them, partly out of superstition and partly out of disgust. Many of the *sadhus*, if sincere, would repent their having outwardly renounced the world and then helplessly begging the mercy of the

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worldly men, whose admiration and reverence they cannot command. They have lost this world and got no glimpse of any world they dreamt of.

While I was residing at Balakeswar, Seth Manila'l Maganla'l (Banka') of Ahmedabad a multi-millionaire (क्रोडपति) and a former acquaintance of mine, somehow got the information of my presence there. He came to see me and insisted on my accompanying him to his bungalow. I complied. Having accepted his hospitality for a week, I desired to go to Mt. Abu. Sethji wanted me to halt at Ahmedabad on the way. We travelled together in a First Class compartment. A few days back I had to travel in the same line in the third class without ticket and without a loaf of bread, and now I was a First Class passenger, though with the same black blanket on ! A few days more and I should be again placed in the same predicament ! A *sadhu* must adapt himself to all such changes of external circumstances and must accept them with calmness and indifference. If he is puffed up with the honours and advantages that he occasionally gets or is disheartened and dismayed by the humiliations and privations and physical ills that must inevitably come to his lot, he proves himself to be unworthy of living the life of a Sadhu and advancing in the path of spirituality. With constant watch upon himself, he has to form the habit of keeping his mind above all such frowns and favours of the outer world and fixing his gaze upon the highest object of his pursuit. Otherwise his fall is sure.

At Ahmedabad Manilalji took me to his own private residence and made special arrangements for the

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improvement of my health. Some valuable brain-tonics were prepared for me and I had to use them. After some days he with his wife escorted me to Mt. Abu and arranged for my stay at his bungalow there. They returned to Ahmedabad and I stayed on alone under the care of their employees.

At this time Muni Nara'yan also came there for recoupment of his health. He was an erudite scholar. I wanted to avail myself of this opportunity for learning something valuable from him. I expressed my desire to read with him two important Vedantic treatises viz. *Vedanta Siddha'nta-Mukta'vali* and *Bheda-dhikka'ra.* He gladly complied with my request. I used to go to his place daily and take lessons from him. He induced me to put on shoes. He said,—"I also had given up the use of shoes. But I found that it affected my eyes. What is the need of courting these troubles? You should wear shoes, so long as you can afford to get them."

From Mount Abu I went to Hyderabad (Sind). There I met Swami Sada'nanda, who took me to his *ashrama* at Dhábwáli Mandi (Punjab). He was one of the most famous physicians among the sadhus. As he had affection for me, he took all possible care for my health and gave me directions as to how to keep it in a good condition.

I could have, if I had the will, availed myself of the company of this remarkable sadhu-physician for learning various kinds of medicines, unkown to physicians in general. But I was at that time so deeply

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averse to all kinds of worldly activities and so intensely intoxicated with the pleasure of meditation that directing my attention to the acquisition of the knowledge of physical treatment was out of the question. But now the mode of my life is considerably changed and I am led by circumstances to live off and on in the midst of people, many of whom I find suffering from various kinds of diseases and a great majority of whom are too poor to buy the help of professional physicians. At this stage my feeling of sympathy for these poor fellow-creatures sometimes raises in me the thought that if I had seized the opportunity of learning some sorts of medical treatment from Swami Sadanandji and other Sadhu-physicians with whom I came in contact, I could employ my leisure-time more usefully in the service of these suffering people. However, these chances were missed long ago and now I am too old to make any attempt in this direction. From the Mandi I went to Rishikesh. A few days' stay at Rishikesh showed that the food begged from the *chkatra* would not at this stage be suitable for my health. I got malarial fever attended with cough. I thought it prudent to go to Benares, where I could get good food, good treatment and good nursing. I had only a few annas with me. I entrained without any ticket. At Lucknow a Bengali ticket-collector showed his sense of duty by putting me, along with two other sadhus guilty of the same offence, under police custody. The station police pressed me for my name, but I refused to tell them anything. With the help of a constable, I went to the adjacent Post-office and with the few annas I had with

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me I sent a telegram to Benares for wiring some money to me in the care of the Post-master. The whole night I had to pass in a small cell. Next day when the police wanted to take us to the court handcuffed and on foot, I objected on the ground of my ill-health. There was a small quarrel between myself and the police. At last they yielded and hired a *tonga* for me. The other two sadhus were forced to walk on foot. In the court I explained my position to the magistrate in English. When I was asked to justify my conduct, I informed the court that I was ill and required immediate treatment, that in this situation it was necessary for me to go to the proper place as soon as possible and that as trains were available I could not think of taking the the tedious foot-path to such a long distance as Benares, though I had no money to pay the fare. Having heard my statement, he said "All right I let you go." I asked him, "What about these two sadhus"? He said, "I shall send them to jail." At this I exclaimed with a strong tone of ridicule,—"Thank you very much, you are sending these poor fellows to jail!" What a glorious act on your part! Just at this moment a telegraphic money-order of rupees six reached me. I offered to pay fines for my poor helpless associates. The magistrate was pleased and released them after taking some bond. Then I said to the magistrate,—"Well, take care not to take all my money, for unless you give me my fare for Benares, I shall commit the same offence again." He complied. I reached Benares next morning.

The purpose of my going to Benares was accomplished within a short period. There I got proper treatment

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and nutritious food. I recovered from my illness. There was perhaps some element in my nature, which would not allow me to stay long in any particular place, however comfortable it might be from the view-point of health and however suitable it might be for the practice of meditation. As soon as my body was fit, I left Benares and went to Sind again. I stayed there at Sádvelá, Sukkar and at the solitary *tapobana* just on the bank of the Indus. One night I was suddenly possessed by the idea of leaving the place. It was 3 a. m., I hastened to the station and caught the train for Karachi.

Having arrived there, I retired to Howábander (Clifton), 3 miles from the town. The lonely sea-shore attracted my heart, but there was no arrangement for keeping the body and soul together. The demand of the body compelled me to hunt for food. A sadhu, having kept me waiting for two hours, showed me the street. I approached a Christian gentleman, who behaved with me in a gentlemanly way, but could not give me what I needed most. Disappointment after disappointment made the hunger more and more acute. Losing all hopes, I gave up efforts for begging, took my seat at a solitary spot and attempted to plunge myself into deep meditation. But I found that while hunger was burning in the belly, it was hardly possible to concentrate the mind upon the spiritual Truth.

My eyes turned outward. They got a glimpse of three sadhus preparing themselves for taking food and a dog sitting close to them. At first I judged that the three sadhus might have procured food just enough for

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themselves and might not have anything to spare for me. But next moment necessity altered my judgment. I thought that they must have something to spare for the dog and that I might try to appropriate the dog's share. The reader should remember that I was an educated gentleman born of a highly cultured and well-to-do-family, and that I was a student of Vedanta, which taught that the soul is eternally one with Brahman and the body with all other transitory objects of the world is absolutely false. He may also remember that I practised abstinence, self-mortification and deep meditation systematically for a pretty long period and even experienced the state of *samadhi*, both *savikalpa* and *nirvikalpa*. He should then be able to form a just estimate of the gigantic power of hunger. From what elevation to what meanness the hunger of the belly can drag down the human mind!

I was awefully amazed at my own thought. But still I left my meditation and eagerly appoached the *sadhus*. The *sadhus* had the kindness not to drive me away. Though the quantity of food they had with them was not, as apprehended, sufficient for four hungry persons, they took pity on me and received me cordially. They gave me a share of their food,—as much as they could spare,—but it was too small for my big stomach. I appreciated the goodness of their heart, but my hunger was not satisfied. I could enjoy neither the bliss of meditation nor the peace of sound sleep at night. I became restless to leave the place as soon as possible. The demon of hunger was about to drive me from this charming place.

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Next day my first thought was to fill my stomach and then to start for Lahore. This would require a continued journey for twenty-four hours. I went to some distance and approached a petty shop-keeper for a small quantity of *chana'* (dried pulse), which he kindly gave. I resolved to lay it by for the train-journey. At a little distance from the shop I found the house of a Gujrati family and called at its door. The lady of the house suspected me to be a Mahomedan Fakir on account of the black rag which I then wore and was about to refuse hospitality to me. I had to convince her that I was a Hindu *sadhu* and that in order to be favoured with two pieces of *chapati* only! The demand of my belly goaded me to another house, where the cook kindly gave me two more pieces of *chapati*. Now my stomach was satisfied and my mind also was changed. I thought within myself,—"This day I have got enough for preserving my body: why should I leave this beautiful spot? If I fail to get anything to-morrow, I shall see my way." Thinking thus, I retired to the lonely sea-shore and devoted my energy to meditation.

Next morning my attention was again directed towards the hunger-problem. I had an impression that Márwáris were generally liberal towards the sadhus. I found out a Marwari's house and came to know that its owner was the famous Seth Shivratan Mehata of Bikaner. I went direct to him and with a prayer for supplying me with food once a day for some time. I told him that the locality was very much to my liking and that if he could arrange for the preservation of my

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body I could enjoy there the bliss of meditation for a length of time. He put to me some questions about my identity and them complied with my request. I gave up the idea of leaving the place.

At Howáh Bunder many people were found in the evening on the sea-shore, enjoying the delightful and health-giving sea-breeze. To avoid them, I used to spend the closing hours of the day at some distant solitary spot, rarely visited by the strollers. One evening while I was sitting there alone in my habitual meditative mood, a Mahomedan gentleman approached me, watched me for a little while, and then offered me four annas. I refused to accept it, for I had no need for money at that time. Perhaps he felt some attraction towards me. He met me again on two or three occasions and held some conversations with me. Afterwards I came to learn that he was a Barrister of Karachi. One day I said to him, "Can you please let me have a copy of the Koran for my study? I have gone through the Bible, but had no opportunity to read the Koran." I may remind the reader that when I had been a boy of 12 or 13 I had joined the Y. M. C. A. at Dacca, and that though the outdoor and indoor games had been my special objects of attraction there, I had also become a regular student of the Bible-class and got lessons on the precept of Jesus from the wife of the local head of the church. I may add that in the jail also I had the opportunity for making a special study of the Bible. But no such opportunity had presented itself to me for the study of the Koran upto that time and my desire also for it had not been strong

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enough. My talks with the gentleman roused my lurking desire and this led me to ask him for a copy of the Koran, of course in English translation.

"I shall borrow one for you," said the amiable gentleman. "The edition I shall give you," he added, "will be Mahomed Ali's, very big with many foot-notes. I do not personally like it, because it is very orthodox." After a day or two he came again with the Koran in his hand and made it over to me. It took me a few days to go through it and to form an idea of the teachings of the wide-spread religion founded on it.

The fundamentals of the teachings of the Koran, as I understood them, are these :-(1) God is the free and sole cause of the world of inanimate and animate beings and each species of creatures was separately created by Him. (2) Satan is another agent, who is responsible for the evils and imperfections of the world. (3) Seduced by Satan, man abused the freedom bestowed on him by the Creator and disobeyed His commands or laws and thus made himself subject to vice and misery. (4) This is the first and last birth of man in the world, and the eternal future of the destiny of the human soul depends upon his faith and actions in this life. (5) Good actions with faith in God in this one life will be rewarded with the eternal bliss of Heaven and bad actions and want of faith in this one life will be punished with the eternal sorrow of Hell. (6) The reward and punishment of all men will be announced on one Judgement-Day, and the spirits will have to wait in some state till that Day comes. (7) There are five principal

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articles of faith,—viz. (a) there is no God but God and Mohomed is His apostle, (b) Prayer, (c) the Poor-rate, (d) Pilgrimage, and (e) Fast in the month of Ramján.

The Islamic creed is monotheistic and the Unity of God is the most fundamental principle of this religion. But what does the Unity of God truly mean and what is the true nature of this one God? Is He a self-conscious Person or an Impersonal Being? Is He possessed of a variety of attributes or is He devoid of and above all kinds of attributes? Is he active or inactive? Is He transcendent or immanent or both? Is He changing or changeless? No clear and definite answers to such questions are to be found in the Koran.

My mind which sought for the most perfect solution of all ultimate metaphysical problems found no satisfaction with the study of the Koran just as it had found none with the study of the Bible. I returned the book with formal thanks. Here at Howáh Bunder some Parsi gentlemen felt interested in me. They found me sitting all alone with a black piece of rag on in the midst of the crowd, absolutely unconcerned with what happened round about me. When they put some questions to me, they were surprised to find in me a student of higher philosophy. They were impressed by my dissertations, but they frankly confessed that they could not follow many of my abstruse arguments. They talked of me to some Sindhi gentlemen of high position and influence. Seth Uddhavadás (afterwards Rai Bahadur) and Seth Lakshmichánd of Shikárpur came to have some talks with me. This led to intimacy with them

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and I was taken to the town and accommodated at the former's Bungalow. Here many people came to see me and listen to my discourses. Most of them were men of common-sense following with little critical examination the current opinions about religion and morality. Hence my ideas were not always palatable to them. Some of them, when expressed in strong terms, were even shocking to them. But still they were very courteous and hospitable to me. Perhaps they took me for an eccentric *Sadhu*. They admired the mode of my moral and spiritual life, while some of my views seemed to them extraordinary and even repulsive. They discovered that while my normal life was a life of meditation, calm and tranquil, unconcerned with the affairs of the world, unattached to name and fame and pleasure and comfort, I could easily turn into a rough fighter in course of my disputations on controversial topics, uncompromising in my views, intolerant of opposition and unmercifnl to the upholders of illogical opinions. As shrewd men of business they could somehow accommodate themselves with what appeared to them to be my idiosyncracy and want of sociable qualities, and they did not fail to take advantage of what they found to be elevating in my life and teachings. But my temper did not allow me to stay long in their company.

Many of the persons who would come to me were vegetarians and regarded the eating of fish and meat as sinful. They seemed to cherish a feeling of hatred towards the non-vegetarians. The Bengalis were generally looked down upon by many people of Western and Southern India on the ground that they were fish-eaters.

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But throughout my travels in all the parts of India I found no evidence to prove that vegetarians were as a rule morally and spiritually superior to the fish-eaters and meat-eaters, that the former were less prone to passions and evil propensities than the latter. The vegetarians might take their stand on the ground of non-violence or non-injury to animal life; but their normal activities were not generally found to be less violent to the feelings and interests of other people or less cruel to beasts of burden and troublesome animals than those of the non-vegetarians. The finer qualities of human nature were not found to be more developed among the vegetarian communities than among the eaters of fish and meat. The spirit of service and sacrifice was not found to be more prominent among the former than among the latter. The mere fact that some people refrained from taking animal food was no ground for holding that they belonged to a superior type or that they were pursuing a higher ideal of human life. I therefore had no toleration for the airs of superiority of the vegetarians and their feelings of disgust or hatred towards the non-vegetarians.

One day in course of discussion I strongly pointed out the inconsistency of the position of the vegetarians. I explained that it was either pretence or self-deception on the part of the vegetarians to hold that they were strict followers of the principle of *Ahinsa* or non-violence. Could they avoid *hinsa* in their practical life or even in the matter of eating? Did not milk contain a good amount of blood-portion of the cow or the goat or the buffalo and did it not abound with innumerable living

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germs ? Was not water full of living organisms ? Did not the eating of vegetables mean violence to plant life and also the cruel act of depriving small creatures of their shelter and means of livelihood ? Was it not proved beyond doubt that plants also were living beings with feelings of pleasure and pain ? Moreover, was it possible to grow vegetables without killing numberless insects of the land ? Could they build towns and buildings without driving out the wild animals from their natural habitations ? How could they hope to or pretend to get rid of the necessity of *hinsa* by merely restricting their food to the vegetable region

I pointed out to them that *hinsa* was the law of the universal Struggle for existence, survival of the fittest, destruction of the unfit,—these were the natural laws in the world of life. Without *hinsa* life would be impossible on earth. Higher orders of living beings were as a matter of course developing by killing and eating the relatively lower orders of living beings. The land and the water and the air were full of illustrations of this law of *hinsa*. The very process of procreation was based on the principle of *hinsa*. Thus *hinsa* being the natural law in the animal world could not be legitimately regarded as a *sin*. With the development of the finer feelings and sentiments in the human mind and the powers of self-restraint and self-regulation, *hinsa* might be restricted, but it could not be altogether avoided. Our sense of value might attach more value to some orders of life than to others. We may recognise some animals as higher than others. Accordingly forms of *hinsa* might be considered more condemnable than

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others. That is to say, moral judgment was passed upon acts of *hinsa* by reference to some other standard of rightness and goodness. But from the standpoint of *hinsa* as such, killing of a plant or an undeveloped animal life was no less an act of *hinsa* than killing of a human being. From the higher moral and spiritual point of view, the cherishing of ill feeling or ill will towards any man or community and the doing of harm to anybody or to any living being with a feeling of hatred or hostility were greater sins than the killing of animals for the sake of food or for the good of the human society without an ill feeling or ill will towards them. If there was no sin in exploiting the animal and putting burdens upon burdens on them for human good, could it be a heinous sin to make use of animal life for the sake of the sustenance of the human body. It did not necessarilly mean cruelty to animal life or the development of immoral feelings and propensities in the mind.

Whether the eating of meat or fish was necessary or helpful or injurious to the human body from the hygienic point of view was a different question, and there was seope for difference of opinion on this point. Only a small section of the human race was vegetarian and the rest was found to be thriving on animal food. The most healthy, strong and intellectually advanced peoples of the world were meat-eaters. Individuals in those nations became vegetarians by choice. My conclusion was that choice of food should be left to individual taste and judgment and there should be no compulsion in this matter on moral or religious grounds.

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The distinctions which are sometimes made between *Sa'ttwika* and *Ra'jasa* and *Ta'masa* kinds of food have very little direct connection with vegetable or animal food. Sattiwaka food is said to be such food as produces or contributes to the development of Sattiwaka Guna i. e. virtuous and peaceful dispositions in man. Rajasika food similarly means such food as is supposed to develop a restless self-aggrandising martial spirit with its concomitant impulses in man. Tamasa food again means such food as is supposed to produce in man ignoble, lethargic and vicious tendencies. The upholders of this view maintain that the habit of Sattwika food is necessary not only for a good life, but also for the enjoyment of lasting happiness. They assert that Rajasa food, though giving some momentary enjoyment due to the excitements of the nerves, leads to misery in the long run. Tamas food, according to this view, leads to callousness and inhumanity. On the basis of such assumptions, the exponents of this view have made a detailed classification of the various kinds of food and arranged them as Sattwika, Rajas and Tamasa. Now, the attributes of Sattwa, Rajas and Tamas are admittedly moral qualities which can in the strict sense be predicated of human character or temperament and not of particular articles of food. On account of the close connection between mind and body and beween the body and food, the kinds of food taken may exercise some indirect influence upon the character and disposition of a man. But there is no rule that vegetable food should create noble disposition (Sattwa Guna) and animal food should create any turbulent spirit or vicious tendencies (Rajasa

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or Tamasa) in the eaters. Whatever connection there may be between food and mental disposition should depend upon the nature of the ingredients contained in the food-articles and their relation to the physiological system and not upon the fact of their being obtained from vegetable or animal sources. These ingredients have to be found out by chemical analysis of the articles of food derived from vegetable or animal bodies, and their relation to the body and mind have to be determined by careful scientific experiments. Now, many of the ingredients are common to vegetable food and animal food. There are elements in vegetable food which may cause the irritation and excitement in the physical nerves and tissues and hence excitement or depression in the mind, and again there are elements in animal food which may have soothing influences upon the nerves and tissues and hence helpful to the cultivation of noble impulses in the mind. Accordingly, some kinds of animal food may be reckoned as Sattwika and some kinds of vegetable food may be found to be Rajasa or Tamasa. Moreover, the physiological constitution of different men differs, and what is injurious to one may be beneficial to another, not only from the hygienic point of view but also from the above-mentioned moral point of view. What may be Sattwika to one may be Rajasika or Tamasika to another, and *vice versa*, according to differences of constitution and of the conditions of health. The differences of climatic conditions and natural environments also have considerable bearing on this question. The nature of the occupations in which men are engaged has also to be taken into account in

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determining what kinds of food are necessary and helpful to them. Accordingly, the health experts prescribe different kinds of food for men of different constitutions and of different localities and professions, and even for the same man under different conditions of health. Truly speaking, every kind of food may be Sattwika Rajasa or Tamasa under different conditions. Hence to hold that vegetable food is Sattwika and meat or fish is Rajasa or Tamasa is nothing but superstition based on ignorance or grossly imperfect knowledge of the relation between food and the human body and mind.

Now my host was at that time a staunch vegetarian. (He, be it noted, became a meat-eater afterwards as a result of his tour in Europe). He seemed to be pained and disgusted by my arguments. When he expressed his feelings to me, I took it as an interference with the free expression of my views. I told him, "I must say what I know to be true; if you don't like it, I bid good-bye to you. So saying, I left the place immediately.

Having left Karachi I went to Malir, at a distance of eleven miles from Karachi. There I came to be closely acquainted with a notable Vedantin, Hemandas Alumal by name. He used to see me every morning and raise various questions on Vedantic and other topics for a friendly discussion. But due to my peculiar temper I could not bear his company for a long time. It was his habit to pass now and then such sweeping remarks, as,—'Western philosophers know nothing about Truth,' 'Buddha did not arrive at the ultimate Truth,'

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'Non-dualists alone have realised the absolute Truth and none other,' and so on. I could easily discover that his remarks were not based on a thorough study and proper appreciation of the systems. It was unbearable to me that an intelligent scholar like him should thus go beyond the range of his knowledge and make such dogmatic assertions. I would sometimes try to tone down his attitude. But I found him perversely adhering to his narrow outlook. I became restless to avoid his company.

One night I felt such a disgust within myself that I hurried to the station to catch the midnight train and travel without any ticket. The police in-charge took me for a thief and dragged me to the station-master. I was however known to the station-master, who therefore let me off. I took the train for Kashmir.

This was my second visit to Kashmir. Here I paid special attention to my health. For strengthening my brain I took 100 almonds ground down and boiled with milk every morning for four or five months. I was recovering my health and strength for continual meditation, when suddenly I got a telegraphic message from Benares that Brahmachari Jajneswar (our beloved Jagada) was seriously ill and that he was eager to see me on the eve of his departure from this world. I took the next available train. But I reached Benares two days after his death. In him I lost a brother who would spare no pains to be serviceable to me and who was the centre of my attraction at Benares.

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CHAPTER XXIV

To Mount Abu Again

At Benaras I felt an inner urge to fly away again from the society of men and keep myself immersed in meditation in some lonely place. This was the result of my self-judgement and self-criticism. I found that my disease made me too much body-minded. The chief centre of my practical interest was for some time past the recovery of my normal health and strength, though my ultimate aim was continuous meditation on Brahman. I went to various healthy places. I took various sorts of medicines and regulated my diet and movement. I walked daily in the morning and the evening, took sufficient rest after my meals, enjoyed good sleep at night, made less exertion for the concentration of my attention on the one object of life. This appeared to me an easy-going life of a gentleman, quite unworthy of a young man with the high ambition of perfectly establishing himself in Brahman-consciousness in this life.

Further, my self-examination made me conscious that as the result of the slackening of my efforts for deep meditation and my association with various sorts of worldly men I was dislodged from the position which I had previously attained. My previous practice had given an inward turn to my mind. Meditation had for some time been converted into my second nature. Even when not actually engaged in deep meditation, I would feel within myself the sweetness of the tranquillity. The world would appear as a dreamy unsubstantial thing

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before my wide-awake eyes. Eating, drinking, talking, walking, etc. would be performed without creating any interest in or impression upon my consciousness. The presence or even the physical touch of any beautiful young woman would rouse no sexual impulse in my mind or nervous system. I would seldom be troubled with the vision of a woman in dreams. My temper would remain equally calm and serene in the waking state as well as in the state of sleep. But now that meditative mood, that tranquil state of the mind, that sweetness of temper, that freedom from sexual impulses, were not found prominent in my character. I would now require greater efforts to concentrate my attention on the spiritual object of my pursuit. My mind would now and then move hither and thither. I would sometimes lose my temper in course of my discussion on philosophical topics with those who differed from me and persistently argued for maintaining any position which appeared illogical or unreasonable to me. To my surprise and dismay I sometimes experienced that my sexual desires and passions were not dead. During disturbed sleep I would occasionally see visions of woman and there would be sexual thrills in my nervous system. In the waking state also my mind was not found to be as calm and unperturbed in the presence of women as before. All these put me to serious thinking. For the sake of my physical health I was going to sacrifice my spritual health? I resolved upon resorting to a solitary place again for devoting myself to deep meditation.

The lonely caves of Mt. Abu again appeared before

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my mind's eyes. I had the sweetest and the bitterest recollections of this place. It was here that I attained a high stage of spiritual realisation and experienced the state of *Nirbikalpa Samadhi*. It was here again that I fell a prey to the brain disease, which proved to be most formidable enemy in the path of my spiritual culture. I was however convinced that the disease was not due to anything wrong in the place, but it was due to my recklessness. The place was favourable in all respects. But *Sadhana* in order to be successful required the exercise of prudence. This time I determined to regulate my Sadhana and to avoid all kinds of rashness. I thought that if I took just a sufficient quantity of substantial food at the proper time, if I enjoyed some amount of sleep every night, if I allowed some relaxation to my brain and nerves at regular intervals, if I took some physical exercise every morning and evening, there would be in all likelihood no recurrence of the most painful disease. On the previous occasion my physical nature did vengeance upon me, because I treated it with negligence and arrogance. This time I made up my mind to give due consideration to its requirements and thought that it would no more thwart my attempts for enjoying the bliss of perfect tranquillity.

After due deliberation I went to Mt. Abu and devoted myself to meditation in accordance with my recent programme. Instead of making any arrogant endeavour to plunge myself into the deepest meditation, I proceeded gently and calmly and tried to keep unruffled the meditative flow of my consciousness throughout

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the day and the night. I mixed as little as possible with men and tried to avoid entering into discussions on controversial topics.

I used to take my meals in Raghunathjee's temple (temple dedicated to Shri Ramchandra who is regarded as one of the ten principal Avatáras or incarnations of God and is worshipped as God Himself by a large section of Hindus.) Seth Jamanlal Bajáj a rich landlord and merchant of Wardha in the Central Provinces and one of the foremost followers of Mahatma Gandhi (whose present Ashrma at Wardha is within his estate) happened to come to Mount Abu at that time. He took up his residence in one of the buildings adjoining the temple (constructed by Seth Manilal Maganlal of Ahmedabad for the convenience of respectable visitors to the place). Perchance the attention of Seth Jamanlal was drawn towards me and he invited me to take my meals at his house so long as he would be there. I was a penniless resident of the lonely cave and had to go daily to the rich man's residence just at the food-time according to programme. There was very little talk between Seth and myself, but still acquaintance between us grew in cordiality. At his house I incidently met Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, the universally respected grand old man of U. P. As one of the foremost political leaders of India, as the founder of the Benares Hindu University, as a devoted admirer of India's immortal spritual culture, he made immense contribution to the welfare of out motherland. His name was well known to me, but I had no occasion to form acquaintance with him. During my stay at Abu, Punditji (accom panied

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by Seth G. D. Birla) was for a few days an honoured guest at the house of Seth Jamanlal Bajaj. Punditji observed my conduct. I was always in a meditative mood with my eyes inwardly directed. I felt no interest in the persons and things round about me. I silently went to the place, silently waited till the food was served, silently took the food that was offered and then silently passed away. My peculier behaviour attracted the notice of Punditji. Sethji might have given him some information about me.

One day the revered Punditji started conversation with me. With his sweet tongue he asked me, "Well, Swamiji, how can you enjoy life with the contemplation of only one object, with constant meditation on Brahman? Don't you feel tired?" I calmly replied to his question in the Vedantic style. The purport of my answer was this: Brahman is the true self of every man—nay of every living being. The essential nature of Brahman or Self is *A'nanda* (Bliss). It is this *A'nanda* which is the ultimate object of quest of all men and all creatures. People pursue diverse kinds of objects, because they find pleasure in them. All these pleasures of the senses and the mind are mere distorted shadows, finite and impure and momentary, of the pure infinite eternal *Ananda*, which is the character of the true Self or Brahman. People are interested in the shadows so long as they are ignorant of the real *Ananda* which is in their own self. When the mind becomes free from moral impurities, desires and passions, attachments to finite transitory worldly objects and ambition for name and fame and heavenly enjoyments, the *Ananda* of the

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Self unveils itself to it. Once the mind gets a real taste of this *Ananda*, it feels no yearning for running hither and thither for the shadows, but concentrates itself wholly on this infinite Bliss. Who can be so foolish as to turn his face against the inexhaustible fountain of the sweetest nectar in front of him and move about madly in search of small tanks and wells and pools of muddy water for satisfying his thirst? The more a *Sadhaka* acquires the capacity for and forms the habit of immersing himself deeply in the blissful fountain of his own true Self, the more does he become averse to the diversities of this world and live a life of ever-fresh enjoyment of himself within himself.

Málviyaji felt interested. He raised many issues and put questions after questions. Which type of scriptural works is the best? *Yoga-Va'sistha-type* or *Bha'gawata-type*? I advocated the former and he for the latter. Which ideal of life is the best?—the one represented by Sukhdeva or the one represented by Janaka? I argued in favour of the former,—the ideal of absolute renunciation, while Punditji argued in favour of the latter ideal,—the ideal of active worldly life enlightened by true knowledge and free from attachment. With regard to the true nature of Brahman, I was an uncompromising advocate of the extreme non-dualistic view, while he supported the view that Brahman is immanent in the world as well as transcendent of it.

Our discussion continued for about an hour. Neither of us could bring the other to his point of view. Punditji's patriotic sentiments were far stronger and brighter

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than his philosophical knowledge. To me the Vedantic view-point was infallible. We were pre-disposed to differ from each other. Towards the close of our conversation the old patriot moved by his patriotic fervour, said to me with a voice warmed by emotion, "Well, Swamiji, you are a young man, I ask you to devote yourself to national work." I construed the advice as undervaluing my spiritual Sadhana, which from my view-point was far superior to ordinary patriotic works. Without showing any respect to his position and grey hair, I retorted, "Punditji, though you are an old man, you are a child in the field of philosophy; go on with your patriotic activities, but along with these, please spare some time to devote yourself to philosophy." The old man with his characteristic magnanimity and sweetness of temper said, "This order of yours I take upon my head." The difference in our temper was perhaps apparent to those who were near about us.

Another notable person whom I met at Abu was a Jaina Sadhu Sántivijay by name. He was regarded by many as a *Siddha purusha* with occult wisdom and supernatural powers. I saw him at the house of the Tha'kur Sa'hib (Raja) of Limdi, where I was inivited to take my daily food for some time. Thakur Sahib was one of his admirers, and an Anglo-Indian lady who lived with Thakur Sahib was known to be one of his disciples. I heard much about his *Siddhi* from them. One day while Takur Sahib, the lady and myself were taking rest after the meal, Santivijayji happened to come there. I felt interested in knowing the depth of his realisation and the nature of his Siddhi. I put some

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questions to him regarding practical Sadhana and especially the stages of Samadhi. (Such as—what does an adept of Samadhi experience in the midway beetween the two Samadhis?) He failed to answer my questions. The situation was uncomfortable to his admirers, and the lady requested me to refrain from asking him such questions as he could not answer. I complied. The impression which the conversation gave me was that he had little personal experience of Samadhi and its practice. Of his Siddhi or miraculous powers also I got no indication. Spiritual advancement had of course little essential relation with the attainment of occult knowledge and power. A Sadhaka might rise to the highest plane of meditation without acquiring any occult vision or miraculous power and conversely a man might give an exhibition of such power and knowledge as would strike ordinary people with wonder and admiration, but his spiritual culture might be of a very low order. Santivijoyji did not impress me deeply either with the one or with the other. I heard that he made some important prophecies about the results of the Round Table Conference between the representatives of England and India and that all of them proved untrue.

At Limdi-house I also happened to meet the Maharaja of Morvi. He put me a few philosophical questions. I answered them from the Vedantic stand-point. Having listened for some time he confessed that he failed to follow what I said. I then kept silent.

Thakur Saheb of Limdi came to see me at my cave on a few occassions. He would every time request me to go over to his place at Limdi. Sometimes he wanted

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to take me there along with him. I could not comply with his request. I said—"Well, if I go with you or be your guest at Limdi, then naturally many persons will come to see me, and it will be a source of disturbance to me and a positive hindrance to my meditation." So I did never visit Limdi.

Here I may mention something about my temperament. I would never care to make acquaintance with the rich or show any sign of regard or respect for them. I actually disobliged and even gave offence to some very rich persons, whom I had occasions to meet, with the least provocation on their part towards me. Besides my natural temperament, this was also due to my contempt for money, which I learnt to look down upon as an obstacle in the path of spiritual advancement. I may add in this connection that though I had acquired the attitude of indifference to money and defiance of the rich, which for a Sadhu might be deemed praiseworthy, still I found how difficult it was to suppress the desire for name and fame. Though I was a beggar and almost unknown to the world, still the desire to gain popularity and reputation would not forsake me. Even fleeing from the world and living in secluded and lonely caves, I found I could not get rid of such desires, rather they would seem to appear there with greater force. These desires would rise through other channels, viz., I am a good Sadhu, I have practised Sadhana very hard, as the result of which I have passed an exceptionally happy life without any worry, without any anxiety etc. etc. Though I knew that the desire for name and fame was vain and I was on the alert to suppress them all

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my life, still they would bubble up stealthily on the surface of the mind, whenever concentration on the highest ideal of my life would be relaxed and specially when I would come in contact with big men of the world. The consciousness of this weakness within my heart made me more strongly determined to conquer it and never to be swayed by it in my conduct. My revolt against my own inner weakness expressed itself sometimes in forms, which appeared offensive to others. I resolutely made up my mind to have my own way, to speak out what I accepted as true and good, to condemn severely what I knew to be false or wrong, whatever others might think of me, and whatever censures and penalties might fall on my head.*

*So afterwards when I came to be convinced that all the religious and philosophical doctrines are logically and psychologically unsound,—vitiated by dogmatism and sectarianism, I would announce my views without the least hesitation, timidity or sense of fear, though I knew that I would be the target of attack from many quarters and lose many friends and admirers. I could envisage that if I stood alone to point out the faults of all the philosophical and religious systems and especially to declare the inherent impossibility of truth-realisation either through logic or through intuition or samadhi, naturally many people, especially Sadhus and Pandits who were very conservative, would proclaim that I was off my head and would try to cover me with ridicule. Nevertheless when I had no doubt about the correctness of my conclusion, I announced my views boldly and fearlessly for the sake of what I conceived as true and good. In this my regard for truth always prevailed, and I would neither

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I came across a number of Jain Sadhus at Abu. I learnt a good deal about Jain philosophy and religion

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care for honour and fame nor for popularity and prestige nor for physical comforts and pleasures. Everywhere I find that the people are so enamoured of old time-honoured ideas, that they do not even care to examine independently any new ideas which may be presented to them. They are predisposed to reject without any rational scrutiny whatever they find contrary to what they already believed. For my independent views I have exposed myself to the enmity or ridicule of all sorts of people, not excepting even the students and professors of philosophy. Almost all of them are followers of particular systems, which they must support somehow or other, and it is my conviction that there are very few who really think or have the courage to think deeply about the ultimate problems. For the sake of what my reason and experience has led me to, I do not hesitate to declare that all systems of religious philosophy **including non-dual Vedanta,** involve contradictions and irrational elements and that they profess with an air of certitude what they cannot prove by logic. As a necessary consequence of this, I am, as I must be, prepared on every side for dispute, contradiction, anger, calumny, and what not. I am neither afraid of my opponents nor do I bear any grudge against any of them. I am always ready to meet them on rational grounds. I know that without such a spirit of fearless and grudgeless opposition on my part, I cannot hope to make any desirable reform in the thought-world. Though I am quite aware of the fact that it depends much on suitable political and educational atmosphere, still in such a poor religion-ridden country as ours, and in such a pitiable plight

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through conversations with them. One of them specially impressed me with his spirit of independence and liberality of outlook. He did not, like the other Jaina Sadhus, put any piece of cloth upon his lips or hold any broom in his hand, as Jain Sadhus generally do for fear of killing insects. Many other customs and habits prevalent in his community he thought unnecessary and boldly repudiated. He generally kept himself aloof from others. He used to give me company now and then and talk about the essential points of similarity between Jainism and Vedanta particularly with regard to the meditation of self as essentialy infinite. I was pleased to find him more deeply interested in the spirit than in the forms of religion.

Another remarkable personality I met there was a renowned Vaishnava scholar, named Raghubardás. I saw him at the Raghunath Temple. He was engaged in editing Ramananda's *Anand Bha'sya* on the *Brahma-sutra*. Though his viewpoint was different from mine, I was pleased with discussions with him on several occasions. I came there in intimate touch with another great scholar

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as I am placed in, I do what little part I have to play. I remain content at heart with this thought that what I declare is true, i.e. based on reason and experience. What I came to understand as the result of long-continued practice and study I have expressed truly, freely and boldly, and this thought would invigorate me and lead me on. Thereby I gain inward peace. Though no one may hear me, and everyone may keep at a distance from me and though I may be almost abandoned to myself, still I am careless of these consequences. My spirit of defiance of the immediate consequences of my action preserves the equanimity of my mind.

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of the same school, named Bhagabat Dás. His Sanskrit poetical work, Ramánanda Digvijaya, added lusture to his name. The book was of course a sectarian one. It was composed with the definite purpose of describing the triumph of one religious teacher of one particular school of thought over all other teachers of all other schools of his time. It was anything but unexpected that a book of this kind would contain half-truths and untruths dexterously mixed up with truths. On one occasion I put a straight question to Bhagabatdasji, "Well, Swamiji, as you are writing Ramánanda's *Digvijoya* (all-round triumph or victory over all rival schools of philosophy), you have to assert that he went to such and such places, refuted all the arguments of the Vedantins of the Non-dualist school as well as of the advocates of other philosophical views, either vanquished them or converted them to his views, and so on. Now, have you any authentic records on which you can honestly rely for making such statements?" He replied, "Yes, I have collected some records, but I have to supplement them largely with my imagination." I asked him if he studied the standard Vedantic works. He did not. I advised him to study them properly, even if he wanted to refute them successfully.

I found that there were many renowned sectarian scholars, who pretended to refute the views with which they had no direct acquaintance. They were contented with learning the views of all other schools from the writings of their own sectarian masters, whose chief interest lay, not in exposing correctly and impartially those rival doctrines and arguments in favour of them,

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but in underestimating them, distorting them, putting them in the weakest possible forms and then in pointing out their weakness and establishing the superiority and infallibility of their own sectarian views. No honest student of philosophy and religion ought to pretend that he has any knowledge of any philosophical or religious system without studying the works of the standard authors representing that particular system. But this honesty is rarely found among the exponents of sectarian views. I referred Bhagabat Dasji specially to *Chitsukhi*, *Adwaita siddhi and Khandana-khanda-kha'dya*, for acquiring some direct acquaintance with the logic of non-dualistic Vedanta. If then he could ascribe to the great saint Ramananda such strong logical arguments as might successfully meet and refute the arguments of these non-dualists, his purpose of glorifying his hero might be to some extent accomplished. Otherwise he would only fruitlessly have recourse to untruth.

Now, it is needless to remind the readers that such interviews and discussions were only exceptional incidents during the period of my residence at Mt. Abu. Not only did I not feel at all interested in such meeting with important personages or entering into controversies with them, but I carefully avoided them and tried to utilize my time and energy in spiritual meditation. Everything went on smoothly for sometime. I left the cave according to my programme only to take my daily meals, but otherwise I was a cave-man all day and night.

But, alas! I was not fated to live a cave-life and enjoy the bliss of continuous meditation. My meditation

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grew in intensity, but that old enemy of mine again made its appearance and threatened me with a serious bombardment on my brain. At first the sensation, though painful, was bearable. But the intensity of the pain increased with the intensity of the practice of concentration. I remembered with horror my previous experience of the fell disease. I recollected the advice of the eminent physicians to divert my attention to other objects and abstain from deep meditation. All my experiments to lead systematically a life of meditation failed. I felt myself under the painful necessity of changing the course of life. I thought seriously about the course of life I might adopt at this stage. I lost the taste as well as the capacity for political and social activities. Though my love for my country and my countrymen did not leave my heart, I was no longer capable of or disposed to giving any tangible and effective expression to it in the form of starting any philanthrophic organisation or leading any political party. The worldly troubles I could not think of undertaking. The spiritual ideal of life was brightly shining before my mind. All but Brahman was false to my inner eyes. What could I do? The only thing other than meditation to which I might devote my energy without losing sight of my ideal was, as it seemed to me, contemplation and reflection on the Absolute Truth and the study of philosophical and religious literature dealing with the Truth. Thus I had to bid good bye to the ambition of my spiritual life and to divert my energy to philosophical scholarship.

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CHAPTER XXV

Faith in Truth-Realisation Lost

I feel it necessary to describe here at some length one of the most revolutionary changes which took place during this period in my entire outlook on the validity of Truth-realisation in Samádhi. I had been a confirmed believer in the traditional view current among most of the religio-philosophical schools that the Absolute Truth is perfectly realisable in the highest state of the phenomenal consciousness which can be attained through the practice of deep meditation. Having attained this state of Samádhi through my own practice, I had for some time been under the impression that I had known the Absolute Truth and reached the ultimate goal of life. When at this period I devoted myself to study and reflection, my attention was attracted towards the mutually antagonistic views held and preached by the most illustrious saints, who are generally believed to have reached the highest stage of spiritual self-discipline and to have seen the Truth. This conflict of views among the recognised Truth-seers roused a serious doubt in my mind with regard to the validity of truth-seeing itself. I examined whether there was any possibility of the direct experience of the Absolute Truth by the finite human understanding. My doubt gradually took the shape of denial. I arrived at the final conclusion that Truth-realisation was impossible. I shall here first expose the philosophic background of the belief in the possibility of the ascertainment of the true nature of the ultimate Reality,—the belief which I had so long

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fondly cherished,—and shall then describe how my belief was transformed into disbelief and how I was convinced of the absurdity of Truth-realisation in common.

Exposition

The experiences attained by the saints of the highest order in *'Sama'dhi'* (deep trance) are generally regarded as of a fundamental different character from the occult experiences of the ordinary *Yogis* or the emotional experiences of the mystics. Those who are sincere and earnest seekers of the Absolute Truth and practise *Samadhi* as the infallible means to the realisation of this ultimate end of human life try to advance steadily in this spiritual path by progressively freeing their minds and hearts from all desires and propensities, all thoughts and feelings, all kinds of bias and prejudice, all sorts of imaginations and preconceived notions, etc. In order to attain the true state of *'Samadhi'*, the consciousness must be perfectly pure and transparent, perfectly calm and tranquil, absolutely undisturbed by empirical thoughts, emotions and imaginings. The seekers of Truth-realization through *Samadhi* are conscious that whatever waves may arise in the mind, whatever cherished ideas may occupy the mind, whatever attachments may give any special twist to the mind, whatever moral or emotional impurities may even lurk in the mind, should stand as walls between the consciousness and the Truth, should conceal the true face of the Absolute Reality from the truth-seeking consciousness or confound it with a distorted view of it.

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Being conscious of the serious obstacles in the way, they,—I mean the best among them,—take all possible precautions against them. In the very first stage of their '*Sa'dhana*' they try to get rid of all their moral defects and weaknesses, all their gross worldly attachments and aversions which are in most cases the sources of the moral depravities, all their sensuous passions and cravings and temptations and fears which make the mind fickle, confounded and impervious to the light of Truth. They practise *Yama* and *Niyama* for attaining moral purity and strength and making the mind Godward. Then they adopt various contrivances for steadying the body and the mind, for attaining mastery over the nervous currents and over the thoughts, desires and feelings. Some forms of *A'sana* and *Pra'na'yama* are practised for this purpose.

By the careful practice of *Pratya'ha'ra*, they withdraw their attention step by step from all worldly objects,—all objects in time and space, gross as well as subtle,—all contingent finite transitory realities,—and attempt to free their consciousness from all thoughts, desires and feelings about them. The *Sa'dhaka* has to struggle hard and long to achieve his purpose. An ordinary man has no definite idea of what a big worldly empire is firmly consolidated within his mind. He comes face to face with only a comparatively few thoughts, desires and feelings which dance on the surface of his consciousness. But below the surface—in the subconscious region of his mind—there are various kinds of thoughts, desires and feelings, which exercise considerable influence upon the nature of the mind

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from behind the scene, which determine his temperament and disposition, the direction and possibilities of his intellectual, moral, emotional and spiritual evolution, but whose presence is not directly felt on the distinct consciousness except under special circumstances. When a *sa'dhaka* makes serious attempts for and becomes to some extent successful in suppressing the grosser thoughts, feelings and desires which create disturbances on the surface of the consciousness, he is surprised to find that many subtle thoughts, feelings and desires rise from below the surface, assume grosser forms on the surface and create further troubles. He has to fight bravely, patiently and strenuously against them. In this way he has to pass through various stages in order to clear his consciousness of the worldly thoughts, desires and feelings, which block the way to the realization of Truth. Successful practice of *pratya'ha'ra* makes the consciousness to a great extent pure, calm, steady and transparent and eminently fit for reflecting the nature of the Absolute Reality in its true light. The consciousness is then focussed on the Absolute Reality. It is concentrated on it. The serene flow of the consciousness is directed solely towards the true nature of the Ultimate Truth. This is known by the name of *'Dha'rana'*.

Pratya'ha'ra, even if it can be carried to the extreme limit of the attention being withdrawn from all the gross and subtle states of the mind as they appear on the surface of the consciousness, is essentially an attempt to produce a calm and tranquil state of the consciousness,—a state in which the consciousness should be not

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distinctly conscious of any object. This is of course not a state of Truth-realisation. This consciousness has to be focussed on the Supreme Object of search,—the Infinite Eternal Absolute Reality, the Ultimate Source and Substance of the phenomenal Universe. This is the practice of *Dha'rana'*,—the positive aspect of the inner apiritual self-discipline of the consciousness for the purpose of Truth-realization. This practice also requires a hard and continuous struggle. It demands the most intensified thought in absolutely one direction,—the direction of the Infinite Eternal Absolute. *Pratya'ha'ra* has to be practised for freeing the consciousness from the domain of the thoughts, desires and emotions concerned with the plurality of finite transitory relative objects, gross as well as subtle, material as well as mental, while *Dha'rana'* is necessary for opening up the consciousness to the light of the One Infinite Eternal Absolute Reality. In course of the practice the attention is again and again diverted from the Supreme Object of pursuit,—it either becomes vacant and contentless or loses its one-pointedness and intensiveness and becomes divided and wavering. Darkness alternates with light, fickleness alternates with calmness, weakness alternates with strength, restlessness alternates with concentration. It is through strenuous efforts that the period of calmness and one-pointedness can be gradually increased. Thus the consciousness, first made considerably free from bias and prejudice, pre-conceptions and pre-dispositions, lethargy and restlessness, and subjection to worldly thought, desires and feelings, has to concentrate itself on the nature of the Absolute Reality, the ultimate object of spiritual quest.

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The period during which the flow of the consciousness remains deeply concentrated on the Supreme Object is the period of *Dhya'na* (meditation). The individual consciousness flows on undivided, undiverted and unperturbed like a single straight current of oil with the Infinite Eternal Absolute Reality clearly reflected on it. The consciousness of the individual ego becomes more and more subdued with the depth of the concentration, and the presence of the Supreme Object becomes more and more vivid and occupies the entire field of consciousness. But still the individual ego remains as the seer or witness of the object, as the subject of the experience, as the enjoyer of the bliss of self-fulfilment. This ego, however, is pure and serene, is not perturbed by any waves of thoughts, desires and emotions, is not vitiated by any gross or subtle worldly influence; its experience is not blurred by any pre-conceptions or pre-dispositions or imaginations. It opens itself up to the Reality and the Reality reveals itself to it. Just as in direct sense-perception the worldly object appears to present itself to the senses and produces in the mind a firm conviction that it is perceived truly as it really is, so in this supersensuous perception attained through deep meditation the Spiritual Reality appears to unveil to the pure tranquil concentrated consciousness and produces in it a still firmer conviction that the true character of the Reality is reflected on it. The Reality is at this stage the object of the consciousness, while the individual ego is the subject. There is a process of experience or intuition between the two. At every successive moment of the flow of the consciousness, it

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is the same object that is present before it, that reflects itself on it, that is intuited by the ego. There being no plurality of objects, no diversities of thoughts, desires and feelings, nothing to differentiate one moment of consciousness from another, there is an undisturbed continuity of consciousness with the same Reality experienced in it. Thus at the deepest stage of meditation (Dhyána) the Truth is supposed to be realised.

It may be noted here by the way that some of those who systematically practise "*Dha'rana*" and "*Dhya'na*" bear witness that at different stages of the practice according to the depths of concentration they get various kinds of spiritual experiences, such as supersensuous visions and auditions and enjoyments. Some also acquire many occult powers. When these experiences are attained, they find no reason to suspect that they are the products of their own *Sanska'ras* or the unconscious tendencies or pre-dispositions or imaginations of their own minds. Just as when a blind man, having got his eye-sight restored, perceives various kinds of new beautiful colours, he unhesitatingly takes them as objectively real and does not regard them as the products of his own imagination; in the same way when a *Sa'dhaka* having closed the doors of his senses against the world and having driven away from his mind all worldly thoughts, desires, imaginations and feelings, perceives within his consciousness in course of his *Dha'rana* and *Dhya'na* various kinds of mysterious sounds and lights, living voices and divine forms etc. hitherto unknown and unthought-of and unheard-of, he is fully confident of their objective validity and never doubts

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them to be the creations of his own subjective tendencies. Many of their experiences are verified in normal consciousness. A *Sa'dhaka* is encouraged by such experiences. But he does not take them as the ultimate Reality,—as the Supreme Object of his spiritual quest. He has to transcend these experiences by the further deepening of his concentration on the Infinite Eternal Absolute Reality. If any undue importance is attached to these experiences, they become hindrances in the way of further progress,—they block the passage to deeper concentration. Hence a sincere and earnest truth-seeker becomes indifferent to them and seeks intensely to realize the Ultimate Spiritual Truth. He devotes his attention entirely to the search for the Absolute and tries to make his *Dha'rana* more and more one-pointed and steady and his *Dhya'na* more and more profound and continuous.

In order to avoid confusion of thought, it is necessary to make one point perfectly clear at this stage. When we speak of the conception of the Infinite Eternal Absolute Reality, we are to remember that this conception is essentially of a different character from all other conceptions,—from all conceptions of finite temporal relative contingent objects. In fact no positive conception is possible of the Infinite Eternal Absolute Reality. Every positive conception involves differentiation, relation, negation, limitation. An object of positive conception is distinguished from, related to and limited by the conscious subject as well as other objects. All objects of perception and inference or of imagination and ideation are necessarily relative and finite. How

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can the Infinite Eternal Absolute Reality,—the ultimate Ground of all relative finite contingent existences,—be the object of any definite conception, and even of any positive imagination ?

But nevertheless when we search for the Infinite behind the finite, the Eternal behind the temporal, the Absolute behind the relative, when we search for the ultimate Ground of this phenomenal universe within which our perceptions and inferences and conceptions are as a matter of course confined, we cannot but admit that some sort of vague indefinite notion or idea is present or is formed in our consciousness about the Infinite Eternal Absolute Object of our search. There could be no demand for It, no search after It, no pursuit of It, no intellectual endeavour for attaining knowledge of It, without some sort of notion or idea or conception about It within the consciousness. In truth, the Infinite Eternal Absolute Reality is the regulative Ideal of all our knowledge. In the field of knowledge our consciousness is always impelled by an inherent urge for transcending the finite transitory relative diversities of actual experience and becoming united with the Infinite Eternal Absolute One, which it inwardly believes to be the Ground, Cause, Support and Reality of these experienced objects. Accordingly the idea of the One Infinite Eternal Absolute Reality is regarded as an *innate idea*, which is essentially bound up with the nature of our consciousness and which is of a character distinct from that of all acquired or produced or *a posteriori* ideas.

Though the idea of the Infinite Eternal Absolute

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Reality is the idea of the Ultimate Ground, Source, Substratum aud Truth of all finite temporal contingent relative realities of our experience and conception and imagination and as such is the most positive of all actual and possible ideas, we cannot in the normal state of our consciousness form any definite positive intellectual conception of this Reality. The Absolute Reality eludes the grasp of every actual positive conception. It always transcends our intellectual comprehension and remains as its background as well as its ideal, since such a conception or comprehension necessarily involves relativity and duality and finitude.

Hence we must accept the paradox that we cannot form any conception of the Absolute and we must have a conception of the Absolute. Without a conception of the Absolute there would be a deadlock in our intellectual life, while a definite conception of the Absolute would convert the Absolute into a relative object of our consciousness. Practically our search for Truth is prompted and guided by a vague indefinite and negative idea of the Infinite Eternal Absolute Reality. At every step of our intellectual progress we form ideas which represent finite temporal relative realities and therefore fail to satisfy the innermost demand of consciousness for Truth. In our quest of the Absolute Truth we try to free our consciousness from all such ideas and to acquire true knowledge of the Absolute. The self-fulfilment of our cognitive consciousness demands that the consciousness should be perfectly free from all positive ideas or conceptions,—all ideas involving differentiation and relation between subject and object,

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object and object, subject and subject,—and attain a state in which the Infinite Eternal Absolute Reality should wholly and solely reign in and pervade the consciousness, in which the difference between the consciousness and the Absolute should disappear and the consciousness should be absolutely identified with the Absolute Reality. This state, if practically attainable, can alone be called the experience of the Absolute Reality. In this experience the subject-object relation being absent, it cannot be called either subjective or objective, it cannot be either of the nature of subjective fancy or illusion or of the nature of objective knowledge, nor can it be of the nature of deep sleep or unconsciousness.

Now, those who systematically practise the deepest form of meditation (Dhyána) for a sufficient long period claim that such a state of consciousness is practically attainable. It is called the state of '*Samádhi*' (trance). At this state, the individual consciousness perfectly identifies itself with the Supreme Object of its search. This Object being infinite eternal and absolute, the consciousness practically transcends its individuality, its sense of ego, its self-distinguishing from other egos as well as from its Object. There is no plurality or even duality in this consciousness. The Object is not experienced as an object, but it becomes one with the Object. The subject-object relation vanishes from the consciousness. No process of knowledge or experience is perceptible in it. No modification of consciousness is felt. The consciousness in this plane is above time and space, above duality and plurality, above process and change,

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above difference and relativity, above the distinction between spirit and matter. This state cannot therefore be called a conscious state in the ordinary sense, because the state of waking-consciousness always and necessarily involves plurality and process and relativity and distinction between subject and object. Nor can it be called a state of unconsciousness, because it is the most perfect state which the consciousness attains by dint of the most systematic and strenuous effort for its self-fulfilment, in which the most inherent demand of the nature of the consciousness for transcending all finitude and imperfection and relativity is satisfied, in which the consciousness shines in itself and by itself without any unrealised ideal to realise, without any urge to know or attain or enjoy anything outside of itself. It is characteristically distinct from the state of dream as well as from the state of deep sleep. The state of Samadhi may therefore be regarded as the *Superconscious* state of the consciousness, in which there is no veil, no impurity, no imperfection, no unconscious element in its character, in which the essential character of the consciousness is fully revealed.

It may be noted in this connection that the term *Sama'dhi* is not always used in this restricted sense of the perfect state of consciousness or the ascent of the consciousness to the superconscious state. It is ordinarily used in the wide sense to mean a state of conciousness in which there is cessation of the conscious states and processes, in which the plurality of mental functions is temporarily suppressed. In this sense *Sama'dhi* is possible in all the lower planes of empirical consciousness and

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may arise from various causes. It may be caused by a sudden shock of surprise or sorrow or fear, by deep infatuation for a person or thing, by some artificial process of breath-control or restraint upon the nerve-currents and so on. In all these cases *Samadhi* is of course different from the state of deep sleep. But it has no moral or spiritual value. It has no connection with the ideals, which the individual consciousness seeks to realise through the processes of knowledge, volition and emotion,—not to speak of the ultimate ideal of the entire consciousness. If we take *Samadhi* in this sense, it is not by itself a covetable state of the consciousness.

Secondly, the term *Samadhi* is used in a more restricted sense of the temporary self-identification of the consciousness with any object of voluntary pursuit. When the mind is so deeply absorbed in the contemplation of a desirable object, that all other thoughts disappear from the mind and all other mental processes are suspended, it is in a state of *Sama'dhi*. As it is the result of some voluntary effort, it has a moral value; but its value depends upon the character of the object which is accepted and concentrated upon as the most desirable for the time being. The object may be a gross material thing or the image of a Deity or a subtle formless entity or a mental state or a metaphysical reality or an ideal state of being. Accordingly *Sama'dhi* is described as of various kinds by those who specially analyse its nature. The nature of *Sama'dhi* is determined by the nature of the object upon which the mind is concentrated and by the depth of concentration.

Though self-identification of the consciousness with

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its object and its freedom from the plurality of thoughts, feelings and desires constitute the fundamental characteristic of *Samadhi* in this sense, it is evident that when the object is a gross or subtle material entity or anything foreign to or of a different character from the consciousness itself, the self-identification can never be complete. The object may be experienced most vividly and may occupy the whole of the consciousness leaving no room for any other thought, desire or feeling; still the subject-object relation between the consciousness and the object must remain, and the object must be, not the thing itself, but the idea of the thing in the mind. There must therefore be some sort of process going on in the consciousness in relation to the object. The identification may be more complete, when the object itself is an idea or an ideal reality. But even then the subject-object relation is not transcended, and a subtle difference between the consciousness and the selected idea or ideal cannot be got rid of. Even when the ego itself is adopted as the most desirable object of thought and the whole attention is concentrated upon it, this plane of dualistic consciousness is not transcended. The consciousness retains within itself in a subtle way the sense of the ego as subject and the ego as object.

All such special forms of *Samadhi* are to be distinguished from the superconscious state which has been described before. In these special forms of *Samadhi* the consciousness is absorbed wholly with the experience or thought of the particular object, gross or subtle, material or mental, actual or ideal, upon which it

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voluntarily concentrates itself. But in the superconscious state there is no definite object upon which the attention is concentrated, there is no duality, no subject–object relation, no particular thought or feeling; the conciousness is then in the perfectly pure simple homogenious self–luminous state; it is no longer an individual consciousness, but universal, infinite, absolute.

It is this state of knowledge or consciousness which is attained in *Samadhi* of the truest type. This is what has previously been described as the state of super–consciousness or super–knowledge, to distinguish it from the ordinarily experienced states of consciousness or knowledge. It is an experience, in which cognition, volition and emotion attain perfection and absolute unity, while all dualistic cognitions, volitions and emotions are transcended. This experience cannot be explained and made understandable to the intelligence or consciousness of the lower planes in terms of any of the experiences of these planes. Nevertheless, it is certainly not a state of the absence of experience, absence of knowledge, absence of consciousness; on the contrary it is the state of the perfection of experience, perfection of knowledge, perfection of consciousness. Accordingly, it is claimed by the exponents of *Sama'dhija–Prajana'* (truth–realisation in Samadhi) that the highest state of Samadhi is the state of perfect truth–realisation.

So long as the practice of *Samadhi* continues, the effort to attain the unity of the subject and the object remains and in experience the subject–object relation is not wholly transcended, so long *Samadhi* does not attain

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perfection and Truth-realization is not complete. It is in the highest *Nirbikalpa Samadhi* that Truth-realisation is complete in as much as consciousness or knowledge then attains perfection, or rather the perfection of the essential nature of consciousness and knowledge is then fully unveiled. It must be futile to attempt to explain or describe the Truth as realised in the superconscious state in terms of the categories of our normal individualistic and dualistic understanding. It is only objects which exist and appear in relation to the individual subject in the planes of the relativity of our knowledge,—which therefore have only relative existence,—that can be explained and described and made intelligible to our ordinary understanding. Nor can the Truth realised in the superconscious state be an object of distinct remembrance or recollection in the lower relative conscious state. It is only in a negative way that a vague conception can be formed of this ultimate Truth or the Absolute Reality.

Critical Reflections.

I have here briefly exposed the view-point of those who take their stand on '*Samadhi*' as the true and sole means of Truth-realisation. I myself had been for a long time devoted to this view and that for this reason I had applied my entire physical and mental energy to the ceaseless practice of Samadhi till the terrible pain in my head compelled me to slacken my effort in some degree. The reader may remember that as the result of my prolonged continuous practice I had experienced both Sabikalpa-Samadhi (Samadhi in which subject-object relation is present in a subtle way) and

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Nirbikalpa-Samadhi (Samadhi in which subject-object relation completely disappears) and that I had regarded my achievement as nothing less than perfect Truth-realisation. But in consequence of my critical study of the standard works of the diverse systems of philosophy and religion and of the mutually conflicting evidences of the universally adored saints of the different religious sects, all of whom claimed Truth-realisation in *Samadhi*, a revolutionary scepticism took possession of my intellect and heart, and led me to think independently on the evidences of the saints and my own spiritual experiences. I seemed to be aroused from my dogmatic slumber and to become thoroughly critical in my attitude.

When I made a comparative study of the realisations of the greatest saints and teachers of the ancient and the modern times, I was awfully surprised to find how they differed from one another in their conceptions of the Absolute Reality and the ultimate ideal of life, though all of them claimed to have attained the highest state of Samadhi. Lord Buddha, who was an ideal Yogi and is universally believed to have attained absolute knowledge through Samádhi, preached that there is no metaphysical Reality—no God, no Soul, no infinite and eternal Existence,—behind the phenomenal existences, and that absolute knowledge consists in the realisation of the falsity of the notion of self and God as well as of all existences. According to him, the ultimate ideal of life is the annihilation of existence (*Nirva'na*), which is the source of sorrow and bondage. The Jaina Tirthankars who also are believed to have reached the highest stage of Samadhi, realised that there is no God, no one

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ultimate material or efficient cause of the world, but that there is a plurality of modifying material elements and a plurality of self-conscious modifying souls, and that at the stage of perfect Truth-realisation the soul, being free from the bondage of Karma, attains omniscience and infinite bliss which constitute its ultimate essential nature. Kapila, the founder of the Sánkhya system, is also believed to have been a master of Samadhi, and he taught that ultimately there are a plurality of metaphysically real Purushas or souls, eternally self-luminous (not self-conscious) and unmodifying (and not blissful), and one Prakriti (which is a complex of three Gunas and is the material cause of the world) existing independently of Purushas, though related to them in a mysterious way. He denied the metaphysical reality of Personal or Impersonal God, and held that as the result of Truth-realisation the self is dissociated from Prakriti and is established in its essential nature. Patanjali, the ablest exponent of Yoga and Samadhi, though agreeing with Kapila with regard to the Prakriti and the plurality of Purushas differed from him with regard to God, since he recognised the metaphysical existence of one special Purusha, who is eternally untouched by the limitations imposed by the Prakriti upon the Purushas in general, but is possessed of infinite knowledge and power and is the eternal Guru of all Purushas, and having no causal connection with the world. Gautama, the founder of the Nyáya school, realised God as the supreme personal being with many attributes and as the efficient cause and ruler of the would of diversities, the ultimate material elements

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(atoms) of which exist independently of Him. According to him, the plurality of souls, though eternally existing, are essentially neither self-luminous nor self-conscious, but it is possessed of the attributes of knowledge, feelings and desires which are produced in it only in its connection with the mind and from which it becomes free when its connection with the mind ceases as the result of Truth-realisation. Acharya Sankara realised that the phenomenal world is non-existent from the absolute stand-point, that the ultimate Reality (Brahman) is ultimately nothing but one attributeless powerless differenceless self-luminous existence, that It illusorily appears as personal and as the efficient and material cause of this false world through some mysterious entity, Maya, which is neither real nor unreal, and that the individual souls, though appearing as many in relation to the world, are really one and identical with the impersonal Brahman. He holds that as the result of Truth-realisation the self is emancipated from its false notion of individuality and becomes absolutely one with attributeless Brahman. A'chárya Rámánuja realised that Brahman is essentially a personal (self-conscious) Being and that unconscious matter (Prakriti) and conscious souls (Jivas) are organically related as attributes within His eternal all-comprehensive nature. He found that the universe of diversities really evolved through the modification of the unconscious Matter or Energy and the Jivas are manifested as related to these diversities in this world-system. According to him, the self, as the result of Truth-realisation, becomes free from ignorance and bondage consisting in its self-identification with the unconscious diversities and lives and has

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its being in Brahman and enjoys bliss therein without losing its self-conscious individuality. Mahâprabhu Sri Chaitanya, the most illustrious saint of Bengal realised God or Brahman as the free and sportive creator of the world-order out of Himself by the exercise of His inscrutable Power, and realised the finite spirits as His spiritual parts and as such different as well as non-different from Him. To him God is the Absolute Player, the Absolute Artist, the Absolute Lover and self-enjoyer, and the world-system is His sportive and artistic self-expression in and through which He freely enjoys His own infinite powers and beauties and excellences. To him the Jiva's self-fulfilment consists in consciously and lovingly participating in the beautiful and blissful character of the Divine.

India is the land of saints and sects, and *Pratyâhâra*, *Dhâraṇâ*, *Dhyâna* and *Samâdhi* are regarded as essential for spiritual enlightenment by the saints of all sects. No one is recognised here as spiritually great, who cannot establish his claim as a truth-seer. I thought over the Truth, as described by a large number of recognised Truth-seers of different sects on the basis of their realisation in *Samadhi*. I have presented above only a few typical cases, whose spiritual greatness nobody can question. I may add the names of any number of *Vaishnava* saints, *Saiva* saints, *Śâkta* saints, Jaina saints, Bauddha saints, etc. etc. The realisations of the greatest saints of different sects are found invariably to differ, so far as we can form ideas about their realisations from their teachings. The realisations of individual saints belonging to the same sect are found generally to agree. The

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realisations of the founders of religious sects are ordinarily found to be reproduced in the realisations of their most advanced followers. The realisations of the disciples accord with the teachings of the Gurus. Of course there are exceptions to this rule also. It is generally the differences of Truth-realisations, which give birth to newer and newer sects.

Now, it is evident that the Absolute Truth cannot by itself be different for different men. It must be or ought to be the same for all true seers of the Truth. It may only appear differently to different individual consciousnesses, and all these mutually conflicing appearances of the Truth cannot of course be accepted as equally true, as representing the essential nature of the Truth. If in what is called the supra-conscious state of the consciousness the experiences of different saints are really different, these experiences cannot certainly be given the name of Truth-realisation. Hence we are either to conclude that none of the great saints have ever realised in *Samadhi* the true nature of the *Absolute Reality* or to assert that only one of them (or one particular class of them) has experienced the ultimate nature of the *Truth* and the rest have been deluded. But in the latter case whose realisation is to be accepted as true? Each saint claims that his realisation is infallible and that those who differ from him must have either fallen into error or had only partial experience of the Truth. The truth-seekers of each sect disbelieve the evidences of the saints of other sects and rely on the evidences of those of their own community. What should the sincere and impartial truth-seekers

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do in such circumstances? When the highest truth-realisations of the greatest saints conflict with one another, what standard can be applied for testing them? Evidently in such a situation what goes by the name of Truth-realisation cannot determine the nature of the Absolute Truth. The Truth as experienced by any one of them cannot be accepted as the Absolute Truth without sufficient ground. Thus an impartial Truth-seeker has to fall back upon intellectual reasoning for testing the truth of Truth-realisation. This means that Truth-realisation in *Samadhi*, towards which we were looking for ascertaining the nature of the Absolute Reality, fails to serve its purpose.

Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, the most remarkable saint of Bengal in the nineteenth century, who was elevated to the position of the greatest spiritual teacher of the modern world through the extraordinary intellectual power and organising ability of his chief disciple, Swami Vivekánanda, found out an ingenious way of satisfying the claims to Truth-realisation of all the recognized and honoured saints of all the religious sects of the world. This Prophet of the Harmony of all religious creeds asserted, professedly on the strength of his own superior spiritual realisation, that all the saints who reached the goal of spirituality (i. e. attained the supra-conscious state) were really blessed with the same spiritual experience and came face to face with the same Absolute Reality, but that they gave verbal expression to their transcendent experience in different forms and showed different paths to the same goal. He also proclaimed that even those who could not attain

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the most comprehensive experience of the Absolute Reality, but approached very near to it, got partial experience of the same Reality; he explained this with his well-known parable of several blind men experiencing the same elephant by touching the different parts.

The message of peace and harmony brought by Sri Ramakrishna is most appealing to the hearts of the right-minded people of the modern war-ridden world. It goes a long way to putting a stop to the religious hostilities, which unfortunately prevail among the fanatical religious sects of the world. But it could not solve the problem, which faced my truth-seeking mind. If saints like Kapila and Vyása. Buddha and Sankara, Ramanuja and Chaitanya, had experienced the same Absolute Truth in their Supra-conscious state, would they and their illustrious followers quarrel with one another on the ground of differences of mere verbal expressions? Can it be reasonably supposed that having realised the same Truth one should deny the existence of God, and another should speak of God as the sole Reality, one should proclaim God as an impersonal Being and another as personal being possessed of infinite glorious attributes, and so on? A rational mind can in most cases easily distinguish between differences of conceptions and differences of verbal expressions of the same conception.

An imparial and unbiassed study of the literature exposing the views of the great truth-seers must lead a sincere truth-seeker to the conviction that those great men differ from one another in their conception

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about the nature of the Absolute Reality. Now, if the conception of each of them be assumed to be based on direct realisation in *Samadhi*. it must be admitted that even the highest realisations attained in *Samadhi* by the best types of saint- are not the same. This means that the nature of the Absolute Truth cannot be ascertained on the strength of these realizations. If it be held that each of the saints, some of whom are even worshipped by their followers as incarnation ol God, realised in *Samadhi* only some partial aspect of the Absolute Reality like a blind man knowing as elephant by the sense of touch, the conclusion must be the same, viz. that Samadhi-realisation does not reveal the perfect nature of the Absolute Truth. But if the perfect nature of the Absolute Reality is not at all realisable in Samadhi or ascertainable by any other means, how can the mutually conflicting realisations of different saints be knowu to be partial experiences of thc same Absolute Truth? The person who judges the realisatlons of other saints as partially representing the same Truth must himself know the whole Truth, and this he must know either by some superior realisation or by intellectual reasoning. What can be the guarantee for the superiority of his realisation? The founder of every religious sect proclaims that his realisation is the most perfect and that the realisations of those who differ from him are either erroneous or partial. All of them therefore are at last compelled to fall back upon intellectual reasoning for proving the truth of what they realise or think that they realise in *Sama'dhi*. Thus I found no hope of

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ascertaining the nature of the Absolute Reality on the strength of what is claimed as Truth-realisation in Samadhi by the greatest saints of the world.*

The mutually conflicting doctrines about the nature of the Absolute Reality propounded by the most highly adored saints of different sects, who are believed to have reached the goal of splritual culture, are sometimes sought to be harmonised by an ingenious contrivance. It is said that in the supra-conscious or supra-intellectual state all saints have exactly the

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* What Sri Ramkrishna realised was not anything beyond his own consciousness or its deep-rooted ideas; but when he awoke from Samadhi (Sabikalpa or Nirbikalpa), he recollected his most cherished ideas, attributed them to the samadhi-state and gave them out as the realisation of that state. When he concentrated his mind on the Mother, he saw the Mother face to face. When he imagined himself as Hanuman and thought of Ramachandra with the all-absorbing emotion of love, he in the depth of his concentration seemed to be identified with Hanuman and to see Ramachandra in his close proximity. When he was initiated into the Vedantic conception of Non-dual Brahman and practised concentration on Brahman as identical with the Self, he arrived at the most concentrated state of the consciousness and on awakening seemed to himself to have fully really realised the identity of self and Brahman. All these only show that he had the wonderful power of deeply concentrating his mind on any chosen idea and absorbing his consciousness for the time being with that selected idea. On awakening he thought that he in his *samadhi* directly initiated the object or reality

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same realisation,—they realise the same Truth in the same way, but when they give verbal expression to their realisation for guiding the truth-seekers of the lower planes, they necessarily come down to the intellectual plane, the plane of normal consciousness, and all differences in their teachings arise in this plane.

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corresponding to the idea. Perhaps as a simple child he was sincere in his belief and he gave expression to what he believed or imagined with the sincerity of a child. The most peculiar phenomenon with Sri Ramakrishna was that at different times he took up different concepts about God or the supreme object of spiritual pursuit, borrowed them from different sectarian traditions, concentrated his mind on those different ideas one by one at different stages of his sadhana and experienced the calm tranquil blissful state of self-identification with those ideas. Whatever may be the nature of the idea chosen, if the mind is deeply concentrated upon it and no other thought or feeling or desire interrupts, the blissful tranquillity of the consciousness must be the result. From the stand-point of this calmness of the mind, all kinds of sectarian *sadhana*, if pursued upto the stage of *Samadhi*, might be legitimately regarded as leading to the same goal, i. e. the same state of perfect concentration of the consciousness. But evidently this does not amount to the realisation of the same Truth or the realisation of any Truth at all. So when it is claimed that Samadhi means Truth-realisation and that Ramakrishna realised the harmony of all religions in the state of Samadhi, the claim is absolutely unfounded and is based on a gross misinterpretation of Samadhi.

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It is asserted that what they realise in the supra-conscious state of *Samadhi* is beyond thought and speech,-is incapable of being adequately comprehended and expressed in terms of the categories of the understanding, which are concerned only with phenomenal relative finite realities. The Absolute Reality revealed in supra-mental spiritual experience becomes subject to the limitation of a phenomenal reality, whenever the mind attempts to conceive and think of it with the help of its own categories and the speech attempts to give verbal expression. Accordingly, the saints, when they descend from the supra-mental plane to the mental plane and come in contact with men and things of this world, fail to give adequale expression to the Absolute Trruth they realise in *Samadhi*, and even to make it the object of their intellectual thinking. But as there is no other way of teaching the people who seek light from them, they submite to the inevitable and preach doctrines in accordance with their mental training, their sectarian bias and the circumstance in which they are placed. In enunciating their doctrines their intellect plays the most important part, and not their supra-intellectual experience. Their own spiritual elevation only adds splendour and force to their teachings.

This interpretation might be of some practical help in making the unthinking people believe that though the doctrines propounded by the great leaders of religious thought in the world appeared to be so very different from one another, these leaders themselves had realised the same Truth, and that their

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followers, though pursuing different paths, would ultimately reach the same goal and should not therefore quarrel with one another. But can a thinking man be convinced that in the supra-conscious plane the spiritual giants have the same experience? If the intellect cannot remember the experience of the supra-intellectual plane, reproduce it in thought of imagination and give expression to it, how can we, dwelling in the intellectual plane, be satisfied that there is any kind of experience at all above this plane and that all saints rising above the intellect in *Samadhi* experience the same Truth? All questions about the nature of the ultimate Truth arise in the intellectual plane and answers must be obtained in this plane. If the consciousness can by any means rise above or fall below this plane, if it becomes either supra-conscious or subconcious or unconscious, the questions may disappear, the demands for their answers may vanish for the time being, and this cannot reasonably be interpreted as direct attainment of the answer or perfect solution of the problem. If there is any real experience in Samadhi, the intellect must bear witness to it, and indicate its nature in the waking state of the consciousness. But as the intellect is untouchable to what is called supra-intellectual experience, as the intellect is admittedly deprived of the privilege of participating in the experience and therefore of having any remembrance of it, and as the intellect has no rational ground for drawing any inference about it, the supra-conscious state of the consciousness must ever remain a mysterious state and no appeal can be made by the intellect to any experience of this state for the solution of its

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own problems and specially for the ascertainment of the nature of the ultimate Truth. Thus we are not entitled to affirm or deny the presence of any experience in the supra-conscious state. nor can we by any means ascertain whether all saints arriving at that state have the same experience or differiences. At any rate, we fail to catch hold of any Truth-realisation in *Samadhi* for ascertaining the character of the Absolute Reality.

Leaving aside the evidences of the universally adored saints, I independently analysed the nature of the *Samadhi* state and examined the possibility of any knowledge or experience in that state. The highest state of *Samadhi* has been called a super-conscious state, a state above the sphere of activity of the individual intellect. It is a state of the consciousness in which there is no difference or relation between the subject and the object, between the ego and the non-ego, between the knower and the knowable, the enjoyer and the enjoyable, the desirer and the desirable. This state is evidently a state of the absolute negation of all knowledge, all feeling, all desire (as we understand these terms in the normal plane of our consciousness). Can there be any knowledge in a state of the consciousness, where there is no one to know and nothing to be known, no experiencing subject and no experienced object? Can it be called a state of self-fulfilment of the consciousness. when there is in it no clear perception by the percipient consciousness of an ideal realised? Can a state be called really a blissful state, in which there is no process of enjoy-

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ment, no ego to enjoy and no object to be enjoyed? That such a state is attainable, there is no doubt about it. I myself had the fortune to have a taste of it. But when it is referred to as a state of absolute knowledge. absolute bliss, absolute self-fulfilment, it is a question of interpretation of the state by our ordinary intellect. It is our intellect that distinguishes between knowledge, error and doubt, between higher knowledge and lower knowledge. complete knowledge and partial knowledge, absolute knowledge and relative knowledge. It is in the normal plane of our consciousness that we distinguish between pleasure and pain, joy and sorrow, want and its fulfilment. In the unconscious and sub-conscious states as well as in the supra-conscious state all these distinctions vanish. Knowledge, enjoyment and self-fulfilment without any subject-object-relation and without any process are inconceivable to the intellect. On What ground, then, can the intellect testify that the supra-conscions is a state of perfect knowledge, perfect enjoyment and perfect self-fulfilment? It can at most assert that the consciousness passes into a state in which the questious of knowledge, feeling and will do not arise at all.

Accordingly what is called the subject-objectless supra-conscious state of the highest form of *Samadhi* is, from the stand-point of our normal consciousness, a state of the absolute suppression of knowledge, feeling and will. and not a state of the absolute perfection of knowledge feeling and will. This being the case, this state can scarcely be distinguished from the state of deep sleep, except that this state is attained by the systematic stre-

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nuous effort of the *Sadhaka*, while the state of deep sleep is naturally produced without any voluntary effort, and that this state is followed in the awakened condition by a sense of self-satisfaction and self-complacence, while the latter is followed by a sense of dullness and inertia. In the former case the individual feels or imagines that his consciousness comes down from a higher state to a lower state, while in the latter he feels or thinks that it rises up from a lower state to a higher state. This may be due to the fact that he aspires for the state of *Samadhi*, concentrates his energy for attaining it and attains it as the fruit of his endeavour, whereas the state of deep sleep is got by him without any seeking, without any concentration, without any idea of its being a desirable state. A person, who suffers from insomnia for a long time, feels its misery and eagerly seeks for deep sleep, thinks of the state of deep sleep, as a blessed state of deep enjoyment, and if he once gets it, he rises from it with a sense of freshness and self-satisfaction perhaps as deep as that of a person rising from *Samadhi*. In fact, to a wide-awake man the state of *Nirbikalpa Samadhi* (Which is regarded as the highest state) is as much a negative state of consciousness as the state of deep sleep,—i.e. a state in which no positive content can be ascertained. The intellect can neither remember nor infer the presence of any positive knowledge or experience or Truth-realisation either in the supra-conscious Samadhi state or in the subconscious state of deep sleep. The awakened consciousness in both the cases has only a vague feeling—and this is sometimes called remembra-

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nce – that there was no disturbance, no pain, no duality, no plurality, no want, no hankering in either of the states, and as such, these states must have been perfectly peaceful, tranquil and full of bliss. Not only our intellect does not and cannot distinctly remember or legitimately infer anything actually realised or enjoyed in the supra-conscious Samadhi state, but any kind of positive truth-realisation of bliss-enjoyment is, as has been shown above, psychologically impossible.

It may be argued that even apart from the state of deep sleep we feel the rational necessity for recognising the sub-conscious and unconscious states of our consciousness, charged with various subtle psychical elements, simple as well as complex,—though in the awakened state the consciousness has no distinct remembrance of them.—in order to furnish rational explanation for the diverse functions of our awakened consciousness,-for our individual characteristics, our special aptitudes and inclinations, etc. etc.; for similar reasons we ought to admit some invaluable achievement in the highest supra-conscious state of *Samadhi*,—some superior type of knowledge and enjoyment incomparable with those of the normal state,—in order to account for the important covetable changes which are perceived in the character, outlook, soul-force, spiritual insight and sense of self-fulfilment of those who come down to the normal plane after having realised that state. If the supra-conscious state be merely a vacant or negative state of the consciousness, wherefrom come the inspiring words of spiritual enlightenment of the saints? Wherefrom comes the wonderful force of their

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personality? How do they get rid of all the problems which puzzle our ordinary intellectual, moral and practical life? How do they find perfect inward peace and bliss in the midst of all the bewildering diversities of the world? That the lives of the saints are of a much higher order than those of ordinary men, that their teachings carry far greater conviction than those of intellectualist teachers,—this is evident to all. Are not all these due to the realisation of Truth, Beauty and Bliss in the supra-conscious state? Would all these have been possible, if the state of *Samadai* had been analogous to the state of deep sleep or swoon? The ascent of the consciousness to the subject-objectless state through perfect identification of the consciousness with the Absolute Truth is not certainly of a similar nature with its descent to the subject-objectless state due to its losing itself in inactivity and complete indifference to Truth. The *Samadhi* state, though subject-objectless, though apparently devoid of the normal function of the consciousness, is not a vacant or contentless state, but a state of the fulfilment of the demand of cognition, emotion and volition. It is from this source that all the knowledge, love, power, goodness, blissfulness, etc. of the saints come in their awakened life.

Such arguments, though plausible, are not convincing to an earnest truth-seeker. First of all, it is not a fact that the attainment of *Samadhi* is invariably followed by a complete transformation of the character and temperament of a man. We come across men with impulsive character and irritable temperament, with greed

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of name and fame and money, with malice, hatred, censoriousness and vindictiveness, with prejudice, superstition, bigotry and narrowness of outlook, with doubts, uncertainties and puzzles, among those who claim to have and are believed by many to have attained the state of *samadhi* by dint of strenuous practice of concentration for a long period. The grandeur and power of personality is not always the result of Samadhi. There are powerful and magnetic personalities, who never experienced Samadhi, and there are persons who rose to the topmost Samadhi state, but can exercise little influence upon their environments. There is no adequate ground for believing that the most illustrious thoughtleaders of the world who exercised considerable influence upon the lives of millions of people and the thought-currents of different sections of the human race in particular epochs of history, derived their inspiration, power and knowledge from any supra-conscious experience attained in the highest state of Samadhi.

However, we may leave aside these considerations as not exactly relevant to the point at issue. Let us admit that the words of extraordinary wisdom and spiritual beauty, which fall from the lips of the greatest religious teachers and captivate the hearts of numerous people, flow from the fountain of their supra-conscious subject-objectless spiritual experience. Having admitted this, we have no right to deny that the differences of views expressed clearly by these renowned saints with respect to the essential character of the Absolute Reality and their refutations of each other's views must also originate from the same source. That is to say, we

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are led to the admission that in the highest supra-intellectual state also,—the state in which the consciousness is perfectly free from all impurities and limitations and relativities, the saints experience the same Absolute Truth differently and form different ideas about it. Without raising the question of self contradiction involved in the statement, are we not bound to confess here that the Absolute Truth is unrealisable in its perfect character in the highest state of *samadhi*?

It is said that the experience is the same, but the differences arise in the field of intellectual experiences. I have dealt with the point already. If the intellectual expressions must necessarily be not only different, but mutually contradictory, what is the ground for asserting that they are expressions of the same experience? It is evident that the nature of the intellect is not transformed or spiritualised by the supra-intellectual spiritual experience, for otherwise the differences in the intellectual sphere also would have vanished in the cases of these saints. It is more reasonable to suppose that the realisations of those saints are different and that differences in their expressions are due to the differences of their realisations. Such divergent realisations with regard to the same Absolute Reality can only be in the intellectual sphere, and not in any supra-intellectual sphere and these divergences must be due to their differences in intellectual training and the conditions imposed upon their realisations by their differently trained intellects.

Many thinkers point to some fundamental points of

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agreement among the teachings of the greatest religious teachers in order to prove the unity or at least the similarity of their ultimate realisations. But this is useless. Some inner agreement there is and there must be among the highest thoughts of the most deep-thinking men of the world, and this is due to the similarity of the constitution of all human intellects and the universality of the logic of human thought. But as thinkers differ inspite of this, so do the saints differ from one another. There may be some general agreement among their spiritual experiences, but there can be no ground for asserting that their experiences fully agree. In the absence of perfect agreement we cannot assume that they experience the same Truth exactly in the same way and hence we cannot ascertain the whole nature of the Truth on the basis of their experiences.

All these reflections are on the supposition that there is some direct experience of the Absolute Truth in the highest state of Samadhi. We have however found, on close analysis of the nature of this Samadhi, that no kind of what may be called real experience or perception or intuition or knowledge is possible in that subject-objectless state of consciousness. Consciousness may be perfect in that state, but it is without any knowledge,—without any content.

Having thus been convinced of the impossibility of the realisation of the Absolute Truth in the state of Nirbikalpa, or Asamprajna'ta Samadhi, I examined if there was any possibility of perfect Truth-realisation in the state of Sabikalpa or Samprajnata Samadhi. That

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there is some form of experience or intuition or knowledge in this latter state is beyond doubt. This state is the fully developed stage of conscious aud deliberate meditation. Here the subject object relation exists in the subtlest form, The subject consciously identifies itself with the object, so that the object pervades the whole being of the subject. The meditating ego becomes most deeply absorbed in the meditation of the object and the object most vividly and all-engrossingly occupies the entire consciousness of the ego. The individual consciousness does not disappear at this stage; but it practically forgets its individuality and remains united with and wholly embraced by the object.

Now the question is, where does it get the object? Does not the individual ego start its deep meditation with some cherished *idea* of the Reality it seeks for and concentrate its whole attention upon it? Is it not this idea of the Reality which becomes most vivid and all-absorbing at the stage of the Samadhi, so much so that the distinction between the ego, the idea of the Reality, and the Reality itself practically vanishes from the surface of distinct consciousness and the idea appearing as the Reality itself occupies the whole of the consciousness? There is no step in the process of meditation, at which it can be said that the consciousness emancipates itself from or is forsaken by its own cherished idea about the Reality and comes face to face with and attains immediate experience of the reality itself. The cherished idea or preconceived notion stand between the individual consciousness and the transcendent Reality at the time of the practice of

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meditation and becomes all in all in the consciousness at the time of the deepest cencentration. The sense of the difference between the idea and the Reality disappears, and the idea becomes the Reality and takes entire possession of the consciousness. Thus what is truly realised at this stage is not the Absolute Reality itself, but the cherished idea or conception about the Reality.

The idea about the Absolute Reality is accepted generally *on faith* by the *Sadhaka* from the *Guru* (spiritual guide) and the recognised scriptures and traditions of the sect to which he happens or chooses to belong and this idea is strengthened and rooted deeply in the mind by favourable logical reasoning. During the period of the practice of Pratyahara and Dharana, the mind is withdrawn from all other ideas, made as much free as possible from distractiug thought, desires, feelings, memories, doubts and impressions, and fixed exclusively upon the accepted and firmly believed idea about the ultimate Reality. With the progress of Dhyana the idea becomes more and more vivid and the distinct consciousness of the idea becomes more and more continuous. When the idea shines alone on the entire world of the consciousness, it appears as the sole Reality. The idea is realised. The Sadhaka who was so long deeply yearning for this realisation is satisfied. He has the feeling of self-fulfilment, He thinks that he has attained the direct experience of the Absolute Reality. When he comes down to the intellectuaf plane, he strongly and sincerely believes that the Reality cannot be anything other than what he has

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realised. The strength and vividness of his realisation makes him forget altogether that he has realised his own cherished idea, and not the Transcendent Reality.

This interpretation of what is known as Truth—realisation in Samadhi can easily explain why the Realisations of the saints of the same religious sect and the same school af philosophical thought are similar, while those of the saints of different sects and different schools of thought are found to be different It can also explain how there is perfect agreement between the conclusions of metaphysical reasoning and the realisations in the deepest meditation of the Sadhakas of the same system of philosophical and religious discipline. Thus what is called spiritual intuition or Truth-realisation in Savikalpa Samadhi follows the metaphysical conceptions about the ultimate Reality prevailing in the sects to which the Sadhakas belong and is not any direct experience of the Reality as It truly is. The human mind is confind within the realm of its own ideas, even upto the highest stage of Savikalpa Samadhi. So long as the subject ego is present, the Reality is to it an object as it is intellectually conceived and spiritually meditated upon; when the subject ego disappears (as in Nirvikalpa Samadhi), no knowledge is possible at all.

It may be argued that when thc human consciousness becomes free from passions and impurities. prejudices and predispositions, worldly attachments and aversions, disturbing thoughts, desires and emotions, when it becomes calm, tranquil and transparent and

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opens itself to Truth, the Truth reveals itself to it, just as a material object with form and colour presents itself to the unvitiated normal vision of a man. The human consciousness attains this pure state and becomes fit for Truth-Realisation through the practice of Yama, Niyama, Pratyahara, Dharana and Samadhi. There then stands no barrier between the Truth and the consciousness. Is it not to be reasonably expected that the Truth should reveal its real character to the consciousness at this stage? Yes, we may reasonably expect it; but whether the expectation is fulfilled or not is to be examined by reference to facts. If the Truth would really unveil itself to the pure and serene Truth-seeking consciousness, there would be perfect agreement among the realisations of the greatest saints of different sects and consequently among their expressions. But this is not found. Our expectation is based on the assumption that the Absolute Truth is and must be perfectly realisable to the individual consciousness of man. But this itself may be an undue assumption. It is quite possible that tha human consciousness is to remain satisfied with relative conceptions about the Absolute Reality and the Absolute Reality is to remain eternally beyond the comprehension of the human consciousness. So far as evidence is available spiritual realisation is relative to the cherished conceptions of the spiritual aspirants.

Some modern exponents of *Brahma-jnana* try to establish it on the basis of a false analogy between spiritual intuition and what is called scientific intuition or mathematical intuition. They fail to notice the vast

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and wide dissimilarity between the two cases. In the case of these latter forms of intuition, the normal self-conscious ego with its relative character and spatio-temporal limitations is present as the experiencing subject, and the scientific or mathematical truths, which also, though universal in form, are phenomenal and relative in character, appear as direct or unmediated objects of its intuition. Such intuitions also are particular forms of phenomenal knowledge. The conditions to which the phenomenal ego is subject do not stand in the way of such intuitive knowledge. But Brahman, as conceived in Vedanta, or any Reality which may be supposed to be unconditioned and absolute, above time and space, can bear no analogy with the universal scientific or mathematical axioms which are regarded as the objects of intuition. The very presence of the experiencing or knowing or intuiting ego is incompatible with the experience or knowledge or intuition of Brahman as such. Whatever the ego can possibly know, whether perceptually or inferentially or intuitively, must by the nature of the case be phenomenal in character, related to the ego and conditioned by the limitations of the mental functions. Brahman cannot be a self-shining transcendent non-dual noumenal Reality and at the same time an object of intuitive knowledge to the individual ego like the a priori truths of Science or Mathematics. Hence no analogy can be drawn between the so-called Brahman-intuition and the scientific intuitions. On the other hand, if the individual ego disappears altogether, the possibility of all knowledge, whether perceptual or inferential or intuitive, disappears along with it.

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According to the Vedantic view-point, the self-conscious egos and the entire world of diverse orders of phenomenal existences experienced by them constitute a cosmic illusion, of which Brahman is the sole real Substratum (*adhistha'na*). In case of every illusion (as in the case of rope-snake) the essential characteristic of the substratum is veiled, but its general character as an existent being (as an unqualified *this*) remains unveiled, while other qualifying characteristics constituting the nature of the illusory object appear on it and falsely qualify the *this* of the substratum. e g. in the case of the rope-snake, the essential characteristics of the rope are veiled, its general character as a mere *this* remains manifested, and the special characteristics constituting the nature of the snake falsely qualify the *this* and thus the snake appears to be perceived there. In the case of Brahman and the world, the essential character of Brahman as one infinite eternal differenceless changeless non-dual Consciousness is inexplicably veiled, Its general character as *Existence* remains unveiled, and the plurality of mutually related finite temporal differentiated changing conscious and unconscious existences constituting the nature of the world inexplicably appear on and qualify the pure Existence, and thus the illusory pluralistic world appears as a real entity. Like every particular illusion, this beginningless magnificent cosmic Illusion also must be the product of positive *Ignorance*, and as in the case of the particular illusions this cosmic Illusion also can be destroyed by the realisation of the essential character of the Substratum, viz. Brahman. This is in general the Vedantic stand-point. Here it is

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supposed that just as the essential character of the rope can be directly perceived by the observer and as by such direct perception his snake-illusion is destroyed, so the essential character of Brahman also can be directly intuited by enlightened saints, and such direct intuition can destroy the cosmic illusion.

Now, those who argue in favour of this doctrine of Cosmic Illusion and of the possibility of its destruction by Brahman-realisation forget for the time being the most fundamental difference between the nature of all kinds of illusion experienced within the world and the nature of what they call Cosmic Illusion. Within the world of our normal experience, all forms of illusion born of relative ignorance about the essential character of particular substances present, as well as the destructions of them caused by the direct knowledge of the true character of the substratum, presuppose the presence of the same experiencing ego with the limitations of its powers of observation and knowledge and its efforts to relatively overcome these limitations. All right as well as wrong knowledge within this world has reference to such an imperfect individual ego existing outside and independently of the objects known. But the Cosmic Illusion has reference to no such individual ego existing prior to and independently of this illusion. All individual egoes are supposed to be born of this Illusion, which is therefore prior to and independent of them. Brahman or A'tman, which is regarded as the non-dual Substratum of this illusory world, has no subject-object relation and hence no process of knowledge within it, nor can there be any knower outside It to directly

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perceive or intuit or realise Its essential character. When Brahman shines in Its essential self-luminous unconditioned non-dual character, there can be no process of knowledge, whether intuitive or otherwise, with Brahman either as subject or as object. So long as any process of knowledge is present,,—whatever the form of knowledge may be,—the ego must be present, the essential non-dual character of Brahman must remain under veil, the cosmic Ignorance must be regarded as operative, the Cosmic Illusion (whatever may be its form) must continue. Thus the destruction of Root-Ignorance, upon which the Vedantists lay so much emphasis. is impossible. Ignorance is supposed to be capable of being destroyed by valid knowledge about Brahman attainable in Samadhi, but that knowledge, at whatever stage it might be attained and whether it was conceived as ralative (in which the sense of the ego was present) or non-relative (in which the sense of the ego was absent). must be the effect of Ignorance according to the Vedantic view. Hence knowledge must depend for its production and sustenance on the existence of Ignorance. Ignorance means veil over the true nature of Brahman. Thus knowledge about Brahman would imply the presence of the veil and the destruction of veil at the same time. This is an obvious self-contradiction. Hence the destruction of Root-Ignorance by knowledge was impossible. Further, if Ignorance had been actually destroyed at this stage. how could it be reborn and bring me back to the domain of phenomenal consciousness?

The true Vedantist thinkers distinguish Brahman—

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intuition from all other forms of intuition (including the intuition of universal scientific and mathemetical truths) by describing it as *akhanda-dhih* (undfferentiated consciousnes-, i. e. a state of consciousness in which there is no differentiation between subject and object (knower and known), no differentiation between *in* and *out* (spatial) or *before* and *after* (temporal), no differentiation between *substantive* and *attributive*, no differentiation of the kind as "this is that" or as "*this is of such and such nature*" In this *akhanda-dhih* the individual con-ciousness is liberated from its normal relative and phenomenal character, from all the limitations of its individuality, rises above time, space and relativity, and attains a state of differenceless processless attributeless changeless relationless self-shining Being-Consciousness which is the essential nature of Brahman or A'tman. Thus it is said that the individual intuits Brahman by becoming one with Brahman.

The modern supporters of Brahman-intuition cannot of course substantiate the possibility of such a form of intuition on the analogy of their scientific and mathematical intuitions, which are all of the nature of *khanda-dhih* or differentiated relative knowledge. They themselves must confess that when all differentiation and relativity disappear from the consciousness, there cannot be any form of knowledge in such a state of the consciousness. Nay, they must also confess that such a state of absolute consciousness, if possible, can scarcely be distinguished from a state of absolute unconsciousness.

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In such a state there would be not only the absence of the knowledge of the world,-the disappearance of the so-called cosmic Illusion,-but also the absence of the knowledge of Brahman or A'tman, If such a state be described as the destruction of cosmic Illusion or cosmic Ignorance, it is not its destruction through the attainment of valid knowledge about Brahman, but through the complete suicide of the erring conscious ego. Where there is no knowledge or consciousness at all, there cannot certainly exist any ignorance or illusion.

I have so far explained in a general way how I come to the conclusion that the realisation of the Ultimate Truth, which had all along been the object of my spiritual pursuit, was not possible at any stage of meditation and Samadhi. Let me place before the readers a short account about how I had previously been convinced ot the validity of my own realisation of Brahman in the state of Samadhi and how afterwards my awakened reason drove off this false belief from my mind. As the result of my incessant practice to make my mental function transformed into the form of the Supreme Object of my spiritual pursuit, which I had conceived under the Vadantic influence as one undifferentiated self-luminous Reality, my fickle thoughts gradually subsided and my consciousness attained deep cencentration. Sometimes I would experience state where I would enjoy the bliss of sweet calmness. At that time I would retain the subtle mental functioning which would enable me to realise some voidness in the mind, free from all thoughts, desires and imaginations,

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free from the consciousness of any other object, gross or subtle, outside or within myself. This experience of voidness I would regard, according to my Vedantic training, as the experience or the veiling Ignorance. After that I would try to shake off that void state and as a consequence of the repetition of some subtle mental functioning in the form of the deep contemplation of the all-pervading Reality (viz. the idea of self-shining non-dual Brahman), I would rid myself of that state of voidness. Thereby I would actually feel that my consciousness was merged in the one homogeneous infinite consciousness from which it was essentially non-different, being existent by the same existence, though appearing as somewhat different. Thus I was convinced of the validity of my realisation, because I thought that I had true acquaintance with the veil over non-dual consciousness, and that I also experienced after the extinction of that veil some state where I realised myself as one with the non-dual self-luminous Reality. But now I arrived at the stage of doubt and critical reflection. My mind was agitated by such thoughts as these, In the state of Samadhi I had the direct experience of the union of the individual soul with the Supreme Spirit which was unveiled at the dissolution of the cosmic Ignorance; whereas many other great saints, who must have attained the very same state of Samadhi, do not appear to have realised the same Truth, since they have given altogether different versons about the ultimate Reality. None of the other non-vedantist saints recognised in their-Samadhi-realisation that there is any such veiling

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power like cosmic Ignorance whose extinction I realised in this state. Though they must have reached the very same state of Samadhi none of them realised any such non-dual Reality without attribute as the substratum of Cosmic Ignorance and the illusory world evolved out of It. The saints or *Siddha,-mahapurushas* of different sects, though attaining the same state of Samadhi and claiming ultimate Truth-realisation, appear to have realised different Truths, since they themselve give mutually conflicting versions of the Ultimate Truth. Some speak of personal God with glorious atributes as the ultimate Truth, some other speak of the dissociation between the individual self and Primordial Energy as the ultimate Truth realised by them, some again speak of the annihilation of existence with no ultimate Truth behind. Can Truth be different for different saints?

When I arrived at the stage of doubt and critical reflection I could discover that though all these realisations were psychologically accurate, the interpretation which I then offered to those experiences was tinged with some superadditions spontaneously arising from my deeprooted conviction of the validity of the Vedantic viewpoint. In this case what happened was that my idea about the nature of Reality as non-dual Consciousness (everything including myself having no separate existence) was projected upon my experiences in meditation. As an outcome of this continuous practice my cherished idea was objectified, my mental concept was substantiated outside, this objectification and substantiation became more and more complete

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and vivid with the progressive depth of concentration, and it then appeared to the consciousness as the true object of realisation.

A subjective idea, when visualised through the concentration of the mind upon it, appears to be as real as a real object of experience, so long as the concentration is not destroyed by some counter-thought or by contradicting idea or experience or its illusoriness is not otherwise demonstrated to the mind. That was the case with me, as it must be in the case of every *Sadhaka* practising deep meditation and *Samadhi*. I practised meditation with the idea borrowed from Vedanta. My idea was visualised in deep meditation. My mind was then free from fickleness, free from all counter-thoughts, free from all contradictory ideas and experiences. There was no doubt or suspicion in my mind that the realisation might be illusory. Hence I was then convinced that I actually realised the Truth and attained the real object of my search. My phenomenal consciousness, being deeply concentrated, was absorbed in and identified with the objectified subjective idea of Brahman, and I naturally interpreted it as the realisation of the absolute identity of my self with the non-dual Brahman. There was no power of judgment or discrimination at that concentrated state of the consciousness. When the power of judgment and discrimination returned after the slackening of the concentration and the coming down of the cosciousness to the waking stage, my intellect, being under the spell of Vedanta, unhesistatingly and delightfully accepted the subjective experience of deep meditation, so far

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as it could be remembered, as the realisation of the non-duality of Brahman and the identity of the self and Brahman. All this was a mistaken interpretation of what I actually experienced in my meditation and *Sabikalpa Samaadi*. I was also mistaken in supposing that my experience of the void state of consciousness was the realisation of the veil over the self-luminous Brahman. It ought to have been plain to my understanding that there could be no experience of the Reality which was veiled by it. Accordingly there could be no experience of the veil over Brahman as such unless there was the independent realisation of Brahman before it. But I foolishly thought that the void state of my consciousness was the experience of the veil over Brahman and that having pierced the veil I afterwards realised Brahman as it truly and independently is.

I experienced also a state of deep Samadhi, in which the objectification and realisation of the Brahman-idea was no longer present, in which the phenomenal consciousness might be said to have transcended itself, in which there was no consciousness of the ego, no consciousness of any object whatsoever, no kind of mental functioning in any sphere. It was the experience-no consciousness-at all. This state could not however be sustained for a very long period at a time. Having come down from this state, I construed it in the light of my previous Vedantic training as the state of Nirbikalpa Samadhi, which I used to regard as the most covetable state for a truth-seeker. This state, though without any actual knowledge or feeling, with-

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out any real enjoyment or positive sense of self-fulfilment, could be easily differentiated from the states of deep sleep or swoon. It was not a state of the lethargy or inertia or inactivity of the consciousness, but it was a state attained through the vigorious effort and perfect objectless self-concentration of the consciousness. When as the result of the sustained effort of concentration of the consciousness, this state was attained, there was no sign of any activity in it, no ego and no subject-object relation and hence no knowledge in it. It could not be regarded as a state of Ignorance or insensibility or a state in which consciousness was merged in Ignorance, as was the case in deep sleep. I interpreted it,—and that is how all exponents of the Vedantic doctrine would interpret it,—as the state in which Ignorance which was the source of phenomenal knowlege completely disappeared and the transcendent Self or Brahman alone existed. I thought that my individual self, which was really nothing but a reflection of Brahman on the phenomenal consciousness whithin the realm of Ignorance, was at this stage of Samadhi perfectly identified with Brahman, on account of the vanishing of the phenomenal consciousness and the Ignorance which gave birth to it.

But now when my faculty of critical reflection was awakened, I found out that there was no valid ground for assuming that this state of Nirbikalpa Samadhi was a state of rising above phenomenal consciousness and Ignorance and a state of perfect identification of the self and Brahman. In fact there was no state in which the self was truly realised, no state in which Brahman

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was realised, and no state in which the identity of the self and Brahman was realised. In the Sabikalpa stage the phenomenal consciousness realised only the *ideal* object which it chose to make the object of its contemplation and meditation and upon which it concentrated its deep attention. In the Nirbikalpa stage there was and could be no actual realisation, the process of knowledge and the function of the mind being wholly stopped. Though the stoppage of the mental functions and of the process of thought, feeling and knowledge might be the result of voluntary efforts, nevertheless it was a state of the stoppage of all functions and processes of the phenomenal consciousness and hence no kind of actual realisation was possible at this stage. If it was a state of the identification of the subject and the object in the consciousness, it must have been the identification of the ego with the *ideal object* which it chose to deeply meditate at the stage of *Dhyana* and which it appeared to realise vividly at the stage of Sabikalpa Samadhi. but there was no rational ground for supposing: that it was identification either of the phenomenal self or of the transcendent Self with the infinite eternal Absolute Brahman as it was above the consciousness.

Here I reflected within myself that though it was psychologically impossible to realise the Absolute Truth either so long as the sense of ego was present, i. e. during Sabikalpa Samadhi, or when the sense of ego totally disappeared. i, e. during Nirvikalpa Samadhi. still there might be an intermediate state between the two Samadhis, in which Truth-realisation

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might be possible. This supposition was based on the notion that since it might be a state in which Savikalpa Samadhi with its consciousness of experiencing ego and its concomitant limitations would be transcended, while Nirbikalpa Samadhi with its absolute self-forgetfulness and total loss of the cognitive function did not arrive, the realisation of the Absolute Truth might not be impossible in that egoless differenceless tranquil state of the consciousness. Thus I was led to suppose that the point of transition between the two Samadhis might be the real field of realisation of the unconditioned infinite Truth. I reflected deeply on the possibility or otherwise of such a state of Truth-realisation. Deeper and deeper reflection led me to the definite conclusion that though such a transition-point between the two *Samadhis* was quite conceivable. no kind of knowledge of any such state was possible and no kind of Truth-realisation in such a state was conceivable. Though I struggled hard again and again, I failed to attain the experience of such a transition-state. Only I recognised after my rise from. Sabikalpa Samadhi that as the result of practice of meditation I had attained a state where my feeling of ego becoming very subtle got the most concentrated stage. Whether I came down to the normal state of consciousness directly from the Sabikalpa state without the attainment of the Nirbikalpa state or after having attained Nirvikalpa state, my power of recollection could never carry me beyond what was experienced in the Sabikalpa state, in which the consciouness of the subtle ego and of the subject-object relation was present. The rise

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from the state of absolute forgetfulness I felt sometimes having been occasioned instantaneously: sometimes I felt that the rise was the result of imperceptible accumulation of the awakening of latent impressions. In no case could I know the reason of the rise from that stage nor could I actually understand what was the nature of knowledge gained immediately after that forgetful state. Thus I experienced that my ego became more and more subtle, then afterwards I awoke to know that there was a state of forgetfulness following the subtlety. When after repeated attempts I could not succed in keeping my conscious feeling intact while leaving behind the Sabikalpa state as well as not getting the Nirvikalpa state, I began to reflect why I could not succed? Ultimately I came to discover the reason. The reason was this. If myself or any other Sádhaka could possibly know the intermediate link between the two Samadhis, then he must know the end of Sabikalpa Samadhi along with the beginning of Nirbikalpa Samadhi, since without this knowledge the link would not be ascertained. But this would mean that the Sadhaka must at the same time get the experience of the known and the knowledge, while at Nirvikalpa. This would be psychologically impossible, since that would put an end to what is called the Nirvikalpa state. Just as no person can possibly know the link between dream and sleep, since otherwise the knowledge of the starting-point of sleep would stand in the way of sleep itself, such is the case here, Thus reflecting I came to understand why Truth-realisation is impossible; since the state of Nir-

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vikalpa as well as the link between the two Samadhis cannot be an object of experience, nothing can be realised having reference to these states. As the forgetfulness after Savikalpa Samadhi till the awakening in normal state is unavoidable for every aspirant, no Sadhaka can know what happens after Savikalpa; Thus I became enlightned with regard to the important fact that no Sadhaka has ever realised Truth nor will any sadhaka ever realise it. Though my own experience is the basis of this conclusion, still from this experience. I can safely and conclusively deduce that as the universally admitted psychological state of forgetfulness (Nirvikalpa Samadhi) can only be possible if there be no awareness in the middle, consequently it is not possible that any adept will realise anything in the forgetful states following Sabikalpa Samadhi, This is psychologically impossible and what is psychologically impossible cannot be possible for any man. Thus my experience along with the critical analysis upon it made me bold to reach the final and decisive conclusion that no one has ever realised. Truth or will ever realise it.

Here in this connection I remember another experiment and experience of mine. On a few occasions. I had the curiosity to test whether I could attain knowledge of outside objects through the practice of Samadhi, in which there was no occasion for sense-contact. Though I struggled hard I failed. What I experienced was that up to the statge of the awareness of deep concentration (Dhyána) I could never shake off the sense of ego, which naturally involved personal

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limitation, Then came the deepest state (Savikalpa Samadhi) where I was not *actually* aware of the state, though through distinct remembrance after awakening from that state I could determine that there was the sense of ego. There also I could not have any sense of myself as related to any object without. So during the stage of Dhyana (mediation) owing to the vivid sense of limited ego having private objective reference (very subtle) I could not afford to get knowlege about the external world, and by ripening of meditation (Samadhi) owing to non-vivid sense of ego I could not afford to retain the capacity of knowing that my consciousness referred to any object of the external world. In the stage of Dhyana I could retain the power of remembering things, so it was possible for me to have some notion of things already perceived. But this could never amount to direct perception of external entities, though the repetition of ideas or the sudden flash of some conceptual notion during that stage might refer to outside entities after rise from that stage (as in the case of mathematical or scientific intuition). in the stage of Samadhi the capacity of remembrance also is lost; so there is no possibility of ascertaining the nature of anything by referring to past experience as we generally do in the case of perception of external objects. After the said states of meditation and Samadhi I would attain to Nirbikalpa Samadhi (unconscious trance) which could be recognised after rise from that state.

Now about Nirvikalpa Samadhi. What happens there cannot be ascertained by any sort of experience

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during the period while it lasts. since any such experience would amount to the annihilation of that very state, just as the knowledge of sleep during sleep would mean its loss. After awakening from that stage, I would get the knowledge that I did not know any thing after Sabikalpa Samadhi till this awakening. So I could discover that no question of objective reference can arise in this connection. I also discovered that I could not determine whether there was in that stage any consciousness or not. There was no means to be aware of this. This could not be determined on the strength of my experience of Savikalpa Samadhi, because there I lost the capacity of determining the nature of anything; further there was then no Nirvikalpa which could become the object of my knowledge. Then there came the perfect blank of every conscious feeling up till the awakening from that stage. So the natur ot actual Samadhi or the link could not be ascertained. Since the ascertainment of consciousness as well as objective reference could only be done after awakening and since this could not evidently be done through perception (the Samadhi being not present now). I would analyse the nature of knowledge after awakenment. By mere experience I could not determine its exact nature, but by logical reasoning I could determine it in the following manner. Either this knowledge after rise must be inference or remembrance. If it be a case of inference, then the negation of knowledge in general could be deduced from the ground of non-remembrance: If I were conscious at, that time I would remember that I was conscious then; since I do not remember,

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so knowledge. If it be a case of remembrance, then knowledge must be presupposed. Now the question is what sort of knowledge is this during Nirvikalpa Samadhi? In accordance with the nature of this psychological state which follows Sabikalpa Samadhi having the subtlemost sense of ego we can interpret after rise that it was a state where there was no such knowledge as we get normally in reference to objects; still there was the subtle state of knowledge called *Sanskara*. Like *Sanskara* which cannot be an actual object of perception, but only inferred through the production of effect (remembrance) we get knowledge about that subtle stage. Like *Sanskara* the knowledge of Nirvikalpa Samadhi stage cannot have objective reference, nor can such reference be proved on the strength of the said remembrance, since it is of the form "I did not know anything." Thus we find that there cannot be anything which may be called objective consciousness in Nirbikalpa. Objective consciousness is a misnormer, since. Objective reference cannot be established either through the analysis of the nature of the said stage (which is a state of suppression of all mental functions), nor through reliance on the actual knowledge of the state or through dependence on knowledge after awakening from that state. Since there is or can be no other atternative in the present case, the only conclusion to which I was led was that there was nothing called objective consciousness during Nirvikalpa Samadhi. Thongh I did not or could not know whether I was possessed of subtle consciousness or bereft of all consciousness during my Nirvikalpa Samadhi, still this I

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could fully decide that there was no objective consciousness during that Samadhi. Besides, I had already found that *the non-knowledge of the intermediate state* between the two Samadhis could only be possible if the were no objective consciousness in the state of Nirvikalpa; otherwise like the link of the deep and deeper concentration it would be known and owing to its being a concentraked state एकाग्र there could never be what is called Nirvikalpa Samadhi (state of suppression विरुद्ध). In this way I came to conclude from my own experience that through Samadhi practice no occult knowledge can be obtained.

From this changed angle of vision I found out a rational explanation for the different forms of realisations of the spiritual aspirants belonging to different religious sects. All these *sadhaks* start their spiritual career with some preconceived notions with regard to the ultimate Reality and the ultimate object of spiritual realisation. These notions they get from their Gurus, their sectarian Scriptures and the biassed philosophers who interpret these Scriptures from a particular standpoint and adduce apparently rational arguments in favour of their favourite views and against all other antagonistie views. Now, the seekers for Truth-realisation with apparent sincerity place themselves under the influence of one or another of these rival religio-philosophical schools. A particular spiritual aspirant, happening to enter into one religious fold, accepts its doctrines in good faith and regards all other doctrines of all other religious sects as false or partially true.

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Having accepted one particular conception as truly representing the nature of the Ultimate Reality, the earnest *sadhaka* devotes himself wholeheartedly to its realisation. He practises *Pratyahara*, *Dharana*, *Dhyana* and Samadhi according to his capacity for this purpose. If he is successful in his endeavour, he visualises his preconceived idea of the Reality in the state of deep meditation and interprets it as the direct experience of the Reality, which exists independently of himself and his mental conception. This emboldens him to proclaim that he has actually seen the Truth. which therefore cannot be otherwise than as he has seen it. Thuse the doctrine of the school to which he belong is supposed to be corroborrated by his spiritual realisation. Accordingly, a Vedantic Sadhaka realises *Nirguna Brahman*, a Buddhistic Sadhaka realises Nirvana, Jaini realises the omniscience of the soul, a *bhakta* realises his beloved Lord, *Bhagavan*, a *bishistadwaitavadin* realises Brahman as qualified by the presence of *Jiva* and *Jagat* within It, a Sankhyist yogi realises the Self as pure consciousness, and so on. They all realise in deep meditation and *Samprajnata Samadhi* their own cherished conceptions and desired ideals, which have no raal connection with the Ultimate Reality. The ultimate Reality, remains beyond their conceptions and hence never becomes the object of their experience or realisation.

Thus my reflections on the nature of my own realisation as well as of the realisations of other saints shook off my faith in the validity and possibility of Truth-realisation in Samadhi.

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Here a problem arose in my mind–when the solution to which I have now been led is so very obvious as can be detected by analysis and introspection into the gradual states of meditation by each and every Sa'dhaka. (if he watches how he tries to project his thought-form at the incessant practice of which that thrown-out mental picture becomes visualised by becoming gradually less vivid, vivid, more vivid and the most vivid). Why did not the illustrious saints, who were also great thinkers, realise this simple fact and declare frankly and openly that the subjective experiences obtained as the result of meditation had no reference to any objective truth and there could never be what is called Truth-realisation? When all the adepts of Samadhi are of one opinion with regard to the nature of the psychological states during Samadhi, viz. that in one state the mind becomes deeply concentrated upon its ideal objects with a vague sense of ego, which makes objective knowledge impossible, and in the other there is no sense of ego at all, hence there is no possibility of any positive experience or knowledge, why did they not confess this fact, but on the contrary contradicted it by preaching Truth-realisation? After impartial consideration of the matter I concluded that this must be due to one of the two following reasons. Firstly, some persons, specially those who were not endowed with much capacity for analytic thought, did not pay attention to the psychological character of these gradual states of meditation and raised no question with regard to the objective validity of their subjective experiences. I suppose the mental state of

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those adepts must have been similar to mine, when I also had been under the illusion that I realised Truth. Before I was disillusioned, I also, like them, had been deeply impressed with the thought that I had realised Truth. No doubt about it arose in my mind. The objective validity of my realisation appeared to me to unquestionable, in as much as it agreed with my Guru's realisation (so far as I could guess from his spoken words) and the truth preached by the Scriptures. These spiritual aspirants practising hard for truth-realisation, should not be charged with insincerity and wilful cheating. They evidently mistook their subjective experience for the realisation of Truth. They may be charged with the defect of analytic intellect and the consequent want of rational reflection upon their own experiences, in as much as they could not recognise the fact that all their experiences owed their origin to the continuous objective projection of their subjective conceptions and not to the actual presentation of any objective reality.

But it cannot be believed that all adepts of Samadhi are such simple-minded persons. There must have been among them other persons who were learned and thoughtful and possessed sharp intellectual powers. They must have thrown the light of introspection upon the psychological stages through which they passed in the practice of meditation upto the state of Nirbikalpa Samadhi. They must have been conscious of the purely subjective character of their experiences. But still we find that they did not raise any question as to the objective validity of those experiences,—at least the

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experiences of themselves, their sectarian masters and their sectarian scripture-writers. They did not like to face the important problem that while the progressive psychological stage during the practice of meditation were admittedly the same for all adepts, what could be the reason for so much divergence and antagonism among the saints of different sects with regard to their proclaimed realisations and their preachings about the nature of Truth. This cannot be attributed either to their intellectual deficiency or to the unimportance and negligibleness of the problem. It is one of the most momentous problems which every religious thinker interested in the question of Truth-realisation must face and can by no means avoid. My thought about those great philosopher-saints have led me to the conclusion that they could not get rid of their sectarian bias. I cannot help thinking that they were themselves conscious of the purely subjective nature of all Samadhi-experience, but when giving expression to them they presented them as objective truths in accordance with the traditions of their respective sects and intentionally avoided the puzzling question as to how the truth realised in Samadhi by the adept belonging to different sects could be different. Even when they felt compelled to deal with this problem, they tried to prove the invalidity of the realisations of the masters of all other sects or to show that the truths which these masters preached were orders of truths; and they attempted thereby to establish with the help of logic that the realisations of themselves, and their own masters only represented the highest Truth.

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In their intoxication with their own realisations and fidelity to their sectarian-masters, they failed to comprehend that if realisation attained in Samadhi were to be accepted as the basis of the ascertainment of Truth, the refutation of the realisation of others (under the same psychological conditions) would imply also the refutation of their own realisation. They would ignore this implication of their own argument and go on preaching their doctrines. This sectarian bias is the reason why the truth about the nature of Samadhi and its realisations has not been declared by any sectarian philosopher. Thus reflecting I got satisfaction in my discovery which taught me the most important lesson that the nature of the human mind is such that no one can have any right whereby he can speak anything regarding the nature of objective reality in reliance upon the realisation of Samadhi.

Now when I was compelled by my rational reflection on Samadhi to arrive at the conclusion and consequently lost my faith, so fondly cherished during the best period of my moral and spiritual life, in the possibility of realising the Absolute Truth in the supra-conscious state, a most shocking revolution took place in my spiritual outlook. It is with this faith in and hope for Truth-realisation that I renounced the world, parted with my loving father and brother and relations, gladly submitted to all sorts hardships and difficulties of Sannyasa-life, and devoted my whole time and energy, even without any regard for my health, to the practice of deep meditation in caves and forests amidst

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the most uncongenial environments. The faith was lost and the hope was frustrated. I used to look upon our ancient Munis and Rishis and the great saints and founders of religious sects as Truth-seers. I used to study with sincere reverence and admiration the scriptures and the teachings of the saints as the linguistic embodiments of Truth directly realised in Samadhi. Now I began to think of them as much liable to errors as ourselves and to consider their sayings, however sweet and sublime, to be tainted by imperfect knowledge and sectarian bias.

One of the saddest losses I incurred was the loss of my faith in the Truth-realisation of my most revered and beloved Guruji. I had unbounded faith in him, I had been under the impression that he had reached the utmost height of Samadhi and attained perfect knowledge of the Absolute Truth. I hadbelived that, though he was not a man of much book-learning, his spiritual insight was unlimited. My belief had been based upon the utterances of many contemporary influential religious persons. My motto had been that I must at any cost and at any risk obey the orders of my Guru, not only because he was my spiritual guide and I placed my life in his hands, but also because I believed that all his commands must issue from his perfect knowledge of Truth. But my critical reflection on Samadhi drove away this faith from my mind. I found out that he also was not and could not be infallible. My analysis of his teachings and the modes of his behaviour revealed that his ideas also

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were not free from the sectarian dogmas which he had received from his spiritual seniors and ancestors. I was convinced that his realisations also must have been the realisations of his previously imbibed and firmly believed ideas. I could not therefore persuade myself any longer to adhere to whatever instructions I had received from him. I could accept and follow only what appeared reasonable to me. My temperament was against my appearing to be what I really was not, against outwardly sticking to what I inwardly believed not, against showing any regard for views and customs which I found to be unreasonable.

Babaji was not then in his physical body. Had he been living, I would have most probably made a clear statement of my views to him. I don't know what the result of my diroct contact with him at this stage might have been. It is useless to make any conjecture about it. The fact is that my faith in his perfect spiritual insight had been an invaluable treasure to me and my search for Truth deprived me of this treasure.

I now lost my aspiration, which I had been cherishing all my life, for the realisation of the Absolute Truth in the supra-conscious state through the practice of deep meditation. I now realised that the Absolute Truth was really unrealisable. I had been practising deep meditation in accordance with the extreme Vedantic conception about the ultimate Reality for a long period. I had occassionally experienced the Samadhi state. I had sometimes even been led to believe that I had realised the Truth at that state.

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My introspective reflection shattered this belief. I became convinced that what I had regarded as Truth-realisation was nothing more than the confirmatiou and deepening of my own cherished idea about the Truth. If my intellect had not been critical enough and my reflection had not snatched away the pleasant belief from my consciousness, I might continue to think self-complacently that I was a Truth-seer. I might then enjoy greater peace and comfort within and a higher position in the religious circle. I might then go on deepening my meditation, day after day, hour after hour, on what I had accepted as the ultimate Truth, enjoying the bliss of Truth-realisation and preaching it to other truth-seekers. But that was not to be. I could no more sincerely continue my meditation in the Vedantic line with the Vedantic pre-conception. I could no more preach the Vedantic Truth as the Absolute Truth realisable in Samadhi. I could no more enjoy the self-complacence or self-delusion that in my Samadhi I experienced the Trnth and in my meditation I was deeply and steadily pursuing the Truth. To me Samadhi was now essentially nothing but the complete withdrawal of the consciousness from all objects, a perfectly vacant and actionless state of the consciousness. It is certainly a state of perfect calmness and tranquility, perfect stillness and silence, without any positive enjoyment or experience. The course of my meditation was now directed in this channel. I had now no object of my meditation. It was not now practised with any purpose in view,—with any ambition of Truth-realization. My attention was now directed

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towards making the mind completely free from all thoughts, desires and feelings, completely self-concentriated and unmoved. I began to practise deep meditation without any reference to Truth or Reality. I found satisfaction in this.

My belief in the possibility of the ascertainment of the character of the Absolute Reality by means of thorough critical philosophical speculation was not however destroyed at that time. I therefore devoted my attention more whole-heartedly to philosophical study and reflection as a means to the ascertainment of the Absolute Truth.

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ERRATA

Page	*Line*	*Incorrect*	*Correct*
5	7	be	have been
13	19	cejoy	enjoy
39	14	comtemplation	contemplation
38	24	Govervment	Government
67	12	to to	to go
72	1	connexious.	connections.
73	8	permissien	permission
74	15	of	×
88	19	seet	sect
91	4	enumeratee	enumerates.
92	32	cocentration.	concentration.
98	2	or.	of
100	28	bccame	became
117	18	Shakara	Shankara
151	11	Rikhikesh	Rishikesh.
153	8	Nutrutive.	Nutritive.
158	28	Efficacious	Effective
164	16	on.	an
166	18	yalue	value
177	1	ratioval	rational
178	3	Ii	If
188	6	otherwfse	otherwise
190	25	temperal	temporal
191	6	perfeetly	perfectly
191	25	At	As
218	9	abovc	above
231	19	somethlag	something
249	15	relatien	relation.
259	7	Mohants	Mahants
297	19	head-Mohant	head-Mahant

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Page	Line	Incorrect	Correct
298	13	Bhung	Bhang
299	10	master–superviser	master–supervisor
301	18	Prava's	Prabha's
315	19	requisities	requisites.
320	7	perseverence	perseverance.
329	3	behing	behind.
362	29	Bhaki	Bhakti
369	17	telerant	tolerant
373	13	not–unreal	nor–unreal.
392	30	realites	realities.
392	31	Trailinga	Trailang
402	22	oi	of
413	14	reasonally	reasonably
433	3	them	then.
451	19	Santivijoyi.	Santlvijayji
454	20	prefess	profess
454	24	apponcnts	opponents.
456	12	Digvijoya	Digvijaya
474	6	I	It
476	31	wovled	world
483	7	splritual	spiritual
485	8	wheneve	whenever
485	15	Trruth	Truth
487	4	experienco	experience
489	5	Is	is
495	4	subject object	subject–object
502	17	ralative	relative
504	5	descrlbed	described
505	10	voidncss	voidness
506	12	atributes	attr:butes

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